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The  
FETISH  
FOLK  
OF WEST  
AFRICA

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ROBERT H. MILLIGAN



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# **THE FETISH FOLK OF WEST AFRICA**

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

## The Jungle Folk of Africa

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"A personal narrative, most realistic, most truthful, most fascinating—the author knows extremely well what he is writing about."—*Chicago Tribune*.

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—*N. Y. Times*.

# The Fetish Folk of West Africa

By  
**ROBERT H. MILLIGAN**  
*Author of "The Jungle Folk of Africa"*

*ILLUSTRATED*



NEW YORK    CHICAGO    TORONTO  
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## Preface

**I**N this book as in the one that preceded it, *The Jungle Folk of Africa*, the author endeavours to exhibit the *humanity* of the African as it impressed himself.

The difference between the two books is chiefly a difference of emphasis, and is indicated in the titles. In the former the African is described in relation to his surroundings—his exterior world. Much is said about the forest—deep, solemn, vast, impenetrably mysterious—wherein he roams at large with nature's own wild freedom; contending also with its mighty forces, and wrestling from it the means of existence by his own resourcefulness of expedient. In the present volume the author essays the more difficult task of revealing the interior world of the African—his mental habits and beliefs. Much is said about *fetishism* and *folk-lore*.

If, despite all that is said herein, the philosophy of fetishism should remain obscure—and there is no doubt of it; if the reader should close this book with the consciousness of a broad, comprehensive ignorance of the subject, it may be to some extent the fault of fetishism itself, which is the jungle of jungles, an aggregation of incoherent beliefs. The world of the African is as wild and strange as the weird world that we often visit on the brink of sleep. It was far from Africa that Siegfried thought it worth while to encounter the dread dragon, Fafner, and slay him for the possession of the magic tarnhelm forged by the Nibelung. In Africa everybody has a tarnhelm.

Second-hand tarnhelms are for sale everywhere. I myself had a rare one ; but I have lost it, or mislaid it. To us, who think of nature as the realm of law, order, and uniformity, the world of the African seems to have gone mad. This madness, however, is more apparent than real. The African thinks in terms of the miraculous ; natural effects are explained by supernatural causes ; supernatural, but not therefore unintelligible, still less irrational. Therefore, if we should not find the fabled thread out of this amazing labyrinth of fetishism, it may be possible to find a thread *into* it ; and not only possible, but also worth while, if within the labyrinth we shall find the African himself and come to know him, mind and heart, a little better.

One need not apologize for the space given to folk-lore so long as Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox retain their present popularity with old and young ; for in African folk-lore we have the originals of the stories of Uncle Remus. Aside from the entertaining quality of folk-lore, its idealism has a human value. In Mr. Lecky's essay, *Thoughts on History*, published since his death, the great historian pays the following remarkable tribute to idealism :

“Legends which have no firm historical basis are often of the highest historical value as reflecting the moral sentiments of their time. Nor do they merely reflect them. In some periods they contribute perhaps more than any other influence to mould and colour them and to give them an enduring strength. The facts of history have been largely governed by its fiction. Great events often acquire their full power over the human mind only when they have passed through the transfiguring medium of the imagination, and men as they were supposed to be have even sometimes exercised a wider influence than men as they actually were. Ideals ultimately rule the

world ; and each, before it loses its ascendancy, bequeaths some moral truth as an abiding legacy to the human race."

Inasmuch as the history of most African tribes must ever remain unknown to us, their legends and all that is included in their folk-lore possess additional anthropological value as a medium through which to study the African mind.

The African, despite his degradation, is interesting ; and that, not merely as an object of religious endeavour, but on the human level, as a man. The testimony of Mr. Herbert Ward—traveller, adventurer, soldier and artist—who first went to Africa with Stanley, and afterwards went a second time and spent several years, is the testimony of all sound-hearted men who have lived in Africa. Mr. Ward, in *A Voice From the Congo*, says :

"There was a good side even to the most villainous-looking savage. . . . They appealed strongly to me by reason of their simplicity and directness, their lack of scheming or plotting, and by the spontaneity of everything they did." And again : "It has been my experience that the longer one lives with Africans, the more one grows to love them. Prejudices soon vanish. The black skin loses something of its unpleasant characteristics, for one knows that it covers such a very human heart."

Nevertheless, the degradation of the African is a fact. And it is being proved that there is no power of moral renovation for him inherent in material progress. Christianity, and nothing else, vitalizes his moral nature ; and therefore it contains the potentialities of civilization. When Mr. Giddings, and other sociologists of a certain class, ignoring spiritual values, demand a gospel for the life that now is, we offer them the same Gospel of Christ, and point to its actual results in Africa ; maintaining that

the missionary is the chief agent in Africa's civilization, and affirming that civilization is but the secular side of Christianity.

One of the stories in this volume appears also in Dr. Robert H. Nassau's admirable book, *Fetichism in West Africa*; and two of the stories are told, in slightly different form, in Mr. B. E. Dennett's interesting book on the folk-lore of the *Fjort*. Most of the illustrations are from photographs taken by Mr. Harry D. Salveter.

ROBERT H. MILLIGAN.

*New York.*

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## I

### THE WHITE MAN'S GRAVE

**F**OR that matter the whole west coast of Africa is called by the natives *The White Man's Grave*; and everywhere the fever stalks along the beach like a grim sentinel warning the stranger to stay away and ready to beat him into delirium and death if he lands. But the name, *The White Man's Grave*, is especially attached to several of the oldest of the coast settlements. Notable among these is Gaboon, in the French Congo, almost exactly at the equator, where I lived for nearly six years, the period of my second term in Africa.

On the long voyage of five weeks from Liverpool to Libreville I had been duly prepared for the worst by the Old Coasters on board, who deem it their duty to instruct all newcomers in regard to the evils of the climate and the certainty of an early death. This duty constitutes a daily exercise during the entire voyage and is discharged faithfully and conscientiously. Each morning at the breakfast-table the young missionary is told that the African fever is inevitable, and to expect it will bring it on in two days. The healthy die first. "Missionaries die like flies." The abnormal mortality among missionaries is due to several persistent delusions; chief among them, the temperance delusion, and the quinine delusion. According to the Old Coaster, everybody whose mind is open to conviction knows that temperate habits are no defense and that total abstinence is a quick method of suicide. Quinine only aggravates the fever; everybody knows that also; but missionaries will not

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admit it. Then there is the minor delusion of the umbrella. All those people who regularly carried umbrellas are dead. Those who didn't carry them are dead too, but they lived longer.

The dreadful racking pain of the fever is adequately described, and then there is added the consoling thought that a man may sometimes escape having it *fatally* by having it *frequently*. "Fatally, or frequently:" the poets among them dwell fondly on the alliteration.

After we have begun to call at the African ports this elementary instruction is reinforced by a circumstantial and realistic account of the death of the "poor chaps" who have "pegged out" since the last voyage. The number is large: I did not know there were so many white men on the coast. Many among them were of my particular build, complexion and general appearance—I was told.

It is not that the Old Coaster is indulging a barbarous sense of humour in trying to frighten the newcomer, but he has become fairly obsessed with the thought of the climate. Sooner or later this morbid distemper seizes upon most of those who live for any length of time in West Africa.

After such an unappetizing conversation at the breakfast-table, a certain young missionary escaped to the upper deck where he was soon joined by an Old Coaster who asked him if he happened to have a prayer-book. Delighted that the conversation had taken a turn (and such a *good* turn) he replied that he hadn't a prayer-book, not being an Anglican, but that he might procure one from a fellow passenger.

"I'd be ever so much obliged," says the Old Coaster, "if you would; for I want to write down the burial service. You see, no matter how a man may have lived, it's a comfort to him out here on the coast to think that

he'll have a decent burial ; so we're neighbourly, and we read the service for one another."

In one last desperate effort to turn the conversation from the dead to the living, the missionary remarked, with considerable force: "But people don't all die of fever out here! What about those that don't?"

"Oh, no," he replies; "they die of many other things besides fever. Let's see;"—and he counts them off on his fingers:

"There's kraw-kraw. Kraw-kraw is an awful nasty disease that just decomposes a man's legs and nothing can stop it.

"There's dysentery. A lot of people die of that. There's every kind of tuberculosis. There's abscesses. There's pneumonia. There's ulcers——"

"And kraw-kraw," says another Old Coaster, coming up behind him. "Why, there was my friend So-and-so ——"

"I've already said kraw-kraw," says the other, and he passes on to the next finger.

"There's Portuguese itch. Maybe you think you know what itch is, but you don't if you've never had the Portuguese itch of the coast.

"There's the Guinea worm. It favours the leg and is sometimes ten feet long. You may possibly get it out if you don't try to wind it from the tail; but anyway it leaves a wound that doesn't heal in this climate.

"There's enlarged spleen. There's——"

"Kraw-kraw," says another arrival. "Why, there was So-and-so ——"

"I said kraw-kraw," answers the leader.

"There's smallpox—in frequent epidemics," he continues.

"And there are so many other parasites feeding on a man, inside and out, that one who has lived on this coast

for several years ought to be able to furnish in his own body a complete course for a class of medical students."

"Did you mention kraw-kraw?" says a late arrival.

"Kraw-kraw?" interposed the missionary. "I know all about kraw-kraw. The highest authorities on tropical diseases have declared that it is not a physical, but a mental, malady that attacks the Old Coaster. The victim imagines that he is an old crow, and he goes around flapping his wings and crying, 'Kraw-kraw.'"

One morning at the breakfast-table, when the conversation turned for a moment to the cheerful subject of cock-tails, a youngster exclaimed: "Gentlemen, gentlemen, I protest against this cheerfulness. For a whole minute the conversation has been utterly irrelevant. Men are mortal and the dead are accumulating. Let us therefore return to the obsequies."

A solemn-eyed Old Coaster leaned towards his neighbour and in a loud, sepulchral whisper remarked: "I give *him* a month."

"I give him two weeks," replied the other.

Many of those who came aboard, especially those from the more lonely places, looked like haunted men. Extreme isolation invites madness. There were moments when the heart of the traveller faltered or stood still, almost crushed by the pathos and tragedy of it all.

At the annual mission-meeting I was appointed not to Gaboon, but to Angom, seventy miles up the Gaboon River. Angom had a peculiarly evil reputation even in Africa, and the appointment was made only after a prolonged discussion in which some contended that the place ought to be abandoned and the climate of that particular station pronounced impossible. The facts arrayed in support of this opinion presented such a gloomy outlook that when, in conclusion, a missionary physician and his wife and myself were assigned to Angom, the appointment

sounded in our ears somewhat like an order for our execution.

Three weeks after we reached Angom I stood one morning on the bank of the river, exceedingly lonely as I gazed after the boat that bore away the physician and his wife, both of them sick and returning to the United States. I remained alone at Angom only a few months, but I was expecting to remain for the entire year, sixty miles from the nearest white man, and unable as yet to speak the language of the jungle folk around me. And besides the barrier of an unknown language between them and me, there was at first such a mental and moral aloofness from the natives that their presence, and especially the sound of their constant laughter, only drove me to the centre of a vaster solitude.

Often in those first days I fought against loneliness and fever together, each aggravating the other. When loneliness would make its most terrible onslaught it assumed a disguise—and invariably the same disguise. More than half the battle was fought when I had penetrated the disguise and learned to recognize the foe even from afar. It invariably approached in the form of discouragement—the intolerable feeling that all I was doing was useless; that I was the fool of a pathetic delusion whose only redeeming feature was a good intention. The doubt suddenly emptied life of all that was worth while and left an aching void; and nothing in the whole world can ache like a void. In our nobler aims and enthusiasms doubt is the worst foe of courage—the thought that one may be making a fool of himself; the highest courage is to resist the doubt, and the highest wisdom is to know when to resist it. I think Hawthorne said something like that.

Let me anticipate the years so far as to say that, although I was always more or less alone in Africa, and drank the cup of solitude to the dregs, I completely out-

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lived these attacks. And, strange enough, the very question which had been my dreaded foe became my strongest ally and defense, namely, the question, Is it worth while? For I fought that question out to a sure affirmative. In later years the dominant feeling, that which constituted the irresistible attraction of missionary life, and made its privations as nothing, was the constant feeling that life in Africa was infinitely worth while, and that nowhere else in the world could my life count for so much to so many.

The first letters from missionaries at the coast advised that I should not think of staying alone at Angom, but should move to the coast and join them at Baraka, our Gaboon station. This did not seem to me advisable, since it would separate me from the interior tribe, the wild Fang, among whom I was expecting to work and whose language I was learning. The coast tribe, the Mpongwe, were already provided for and did not need me. But as time passed letters came from all over the mission making so strong a protest that it seemed inadvisable to "insist upon being a martyr"—as my fellow missionaries expressed it, with naïve candour. One friend added that if I died, or rather *when* I died, I would have no one to blame for it but myself. That settled it. The idea of dying with no one to blame for it, after the lonely life at Angom, was entirely too unsensational; so I moved to Baraka, where some one could be blamed when I died.

The name *Gaboon* is used, especially by the English, in a general way to designate not only the river of that name but all the adjacent territory. Most people prefer it to the name *Libreville*, because it is of native origin; and they like the far-away sound of it. If we would be strictly accurate, however, the name belongs only to the great estuary of the river. The Gaboon River is not long, but it receives many tributaries and for the last hundred

miles from the sea it is magnificent. Forty miles before it reaches the sea it bends northward by northwest and widens out into a broad estuary from five to fifteen miles in width and forty miles long, which I have always called the *bay*. It is one of the few, and one of the best, harbours on the entire coast of Africa. Libreville, the old French capital of the Congo Français, and Baraka, our mission station, are situated on the east bank of the estuary and opposite its broad mouth. They look therefore directly over the sea.

Gaboon was known in the Middle Ages and probably in the early centuries. Travellers and adventurers of a superstitious age, passing upon the high seas, reported that it was a dreadful land where at night strange fires bursting from the earth leaped to the clouds and reddened the sky, fires which probably came from "inferno" not far beneath. It is quite possible that the fire which they saw may have issued from Mount Kamerun, farther to the north, which is now an extinct volcano ; but there is a more likely explanation. The country around Gaboon is more open than most parts of West Africa. A dense undergrowth of shrubbery and long grass grows up each year, which towards the end of the dry season is burned off by the natives, in some places to clear their gardens, and in some places for the fun of seeing it burn. As seen from the mission hill the fires are seldom extensive, though the effect is a ruddy glow upon the clouds and is beautiful. But as I have seen them when out upon the bay at night, and upon the sea, the effect of their full extent, the glowing sky and its reflection in the sea, were sufficient to inspire awe and impress deeply the superstitious mind of a sailor gazing on a strange land of savage people.

Libreville as it is approached from the sea is one of the most beautiful places on the entire West Coast. The gov-

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ernment buildings stand upon a hill, the *Plateau*, from which a handsome boulevard runs to the south parallel with the beach, between rows of giant coco-palms. On this boulevard are the trading-houses, French, Portuguese, German and English. The buildings are nearly all white, including the iron roofs; but some of them have roofs of red tile. There are many beautiful trees. The houses are only half visible through screens of foliage; and along the walks every unsightly thing, every deserted building or decaying hut is overgrown with vines of delicate beauty and the wildest profusion of scarlet, purple and lavender flowers.

The beach is strewn with logs of African mahogany of great value, which the traders are preparing to ship. For these they have exchanged a variety of goods. They carry a large stock of flint-lock guns especially for the interior trade. The average price of a trade-gun is five dollars. They are called "gas-pipe" guns in the vernacular of the coast. The barrel is three feet four inches long, and the bore Mr. Richard Harding Davis compares to an artesian well. "The native fills four inches of this cavity with powder and the remaining three feet with rusty nails, barbed wire, leaden slugs, and broken parts of iron pots." This dreadful weapon "kicks" so violently in the recoil that it is always a question as to which is the more dangerous end. Of course, if the contents of the barrel should actually enter a man's body it would tear him all to pieces. But there is always a doubt about the aim, and there is no doubt about the kick.

Two miles south of the Plateau there is another hill nearly as high, and having the finest outlook towards the sea. On this hill is the mission station, Baraka.

The house, as one approaches it, appears through a screen of palms and orange-trees, of the strong-scented



MISSION HOUSE AT BARAKA, GABOON.  
The roof is of palm thatch, upon which poles of bamboo are placed.



frangipani, the scarlet hibiscus, and oleander growing as high as the house. There is an abundance of roses everywhere. There are also a few coffee-trees in the yard, and one exquisite cinnamon.

The view from the veranda of the mission house at Baraka is a scene of magic beauty. The joyous lavishness of colour excludes from the mind the thought of the deadly serpent and the relentless fever-fiend that stealthily glide within the shadows. The long hillside sloping to the beach is half covered with mangoes and palms, oleander and orange-trees, and the graceful plumes of the bamboo that wave to and fro and tumble in the breeze like children at play. In front is the open sea. On the left, looking up the estuary, one sees in the bright morning light a fairy island of deep emerald set in a silver sea, and beyond it a distant shore in dim purple and gold. And even while one is looking, the island, the silver sea and the golden-purple shore gradually dissolve and disappear in the haze that gathers and deepens as the day advances. But again, and always, it appears in the clear evening light, more beautiful than ever.

I found it impossible to persuade my friends that Gaboon is not the hottest place in the world, since it is not only in Africa, but at the equator. This was also my own idea of Gaboon until it was corrected by experience. It is not as hot at the equator as it is several hundred miles north or south of it. The thermometer ranges between 72° and 86°, seldom going above or below this range. But the humidity is extreme (not surpassed, I believe, in the world) and this makes it seem hotter than these figures would indicate. The atmosphere feels as if it were about fifty per cent. hot water. At the coast there is the delightful sea-breeze—but as soon as one says it is "delightful" he is reminded that it is very dangerous.

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One hears from the natives of the coast more complaints of cold than of heat and in the hottest weather their black skin is always cool. The hot months are December and January ; and the coolest are June and July.

The wet and dry seasons of Gaboon are very distinct. The dry season begins in May and lasts for four months, during all which time there is not a shower. Then the wet season begins in September and lasts four months, during which it rains almost incessantly. This is followed by a short dry season of two months and a short wet season of two months, thus completing the year. This succession of the seasons is as regular and distinct as our winter and summer. The effect of the long dry season corresponds in some respects to our winter, giving vegetation a rest. Europeans delight in the dry season, although towards the last they long for the rain. But the natives dislike the dry season, which is too cool for their comfort ; and since the land-breeze is very strong, and their bodies but slightly protected with clothing, there is much sickness among them in these months.

I never told the Africans about ice, nor described snow, lest it would overtax their credulity and discredit me ; for if they should doubt I had no way of proving it. But after the French hospital was built the Gaboon people not only heard about ice but many of them actually saw it. One day we obtained a piece of ice at Baraka, sufficient to make ice-cream. When we had finished eating I took some of it out to the men of my boat-crew and after telling them that it was something which we liked very much, I gave a teaspoonful to Makuba, the captain. No sooner had it entered his mouth than he leaped into the air with a wild yell—wild even for Africa. He shouted : “ I’m killed ! I’m burned to death ! I’m burned to death ! ”

The extremest sensation of cold seems to be not dis-

tinguishable from that of extreme heat. Never having tasted anything cold, it is positively painful to them.

Despite the exaggeration of the Old Coaster we are constantly reminded that, after all, Gaboon is *The White Man's Grave*. There were a number of Anamese prisoners of war whom the French had transported from Anam. They were employed in the construction of two miles of road along the beach. During the few months of work seventy out of one hundred died. In this dreadful death rate there were probably unusual factors. The road crosses a marsh that is a first-class incubator for mosquitoes. And besides, it is not likely that the men were reasonably provided with food or medical attendance.

Even upon the subject of the climate opinions differ. There are some persons—very few—who, after living in West Africa a number of years, become so used to its death record that they seem to think that every other place is just the same. One or another of these occasionally becomes an indignant champion of the climate. At one of our annual mission meetings I offered a resolution appealing to the Board of Missions in New York for an extra allowance for health changes, in view of the "hostile climate." A veteran missionary, whose many years in Africa made him the wonder of the coast, objected to the word *hostile*, declaring that unless it were stricken out he would vote against the resolution. But with charming inconsistency he added that he fully realized the need of the extra allowance and he would gladly vote for it if only, for the word *hostile*, we would substitute the word *peculiar*.

Next morning after breakfast, Mr. Gault, in whose home I was staying, said to me: "Apropos of the objection made yesterday to the word *hostile* as applied to this salubrious climate, have you observed that every one who asks a blessing at the breakfast-table seems to be

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thankful—and surprised—that none of us has been stricken down during the night and that we are all again able to get to the table?

“The more remarkable,” he added, “when we recall that we were chosen by the Board not because we were either good or clever, but chiefly because of our constitutions.”

It was only a short time afterwards that Mr. Gault himself one morning was not able to get to the breakfast-table. Two days later they buried him at Batanga. He was one of the truest and best men I have ever known.

There is less fever now than there was a few years ago, and the death record is decreasing. Not that the conditions are much improved; but common sense has prevailed, and men as soon as they become seriously ill hasten away on the first steamer. Besides, the proper use of quinine as a preventive is better understood as the result of the knowledge of the sources of malaria and its various stages.

The mosquito theory—that the *Anopheles* mosquito is the carrying agent of the malaria parasite—is of course generally accepted. The late Dr. Koch advised that a liberal dose of quinine every eighth or ninth day ought to be an effective preventive with most persons. Major Ronald Ross, head of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, advised the destruction of the mosquito, chiefly by drainage, and the segregation of white people from the natives. The natives have become at least partially immune; but there are numerous malaria parasites in their blood constituting the source from which it is carried by the mosquito, which after biting a native bites a white person; and when the white man's blood is malarious a little exposure to the tropical sun, a slight chill, even a mental shock or undue strain, anything that lowers the vitality, is likely to precipitate the fever.

I myself, after several years of frequent fever, at last gained practical immunity by taking five grains of quinine every night, which I did without omission for three years, until I left the coast. If my vitality had not been already reduced to the minimum I would not have required so much quinine. Many persons, instead of taking quinine regularly, wait until the fever actually comes and then take very large, nerve-shattering doses for successive days, from thirty to sixty or even ninety grains a day. One may recover from the fever, but one does not entirely recover from the quinine until he leaves the coast.

Sometimes the newcomer is fairly frightened into a fever by those who have lived in Africa long enough to have become obsessed with the thought of the climate and whose conversation it completely absorbs.

Near the end of my voyage to Africa I spent a night ashore at a certain mission, where a good lady who was in a very sociable mood, having shown me to my room, stood in the doorway telling me of the various persons—not a few—who had died in that particular room, and giving some graphic detail of each death. It was gradually borne in upon me that there must be some horrible fatality attached to that room. Finally she advised me not to lock my door. "For," said she, "Mr. P——, who always locked his bedroom door, was found dead in bed one morning in this very room, although he went to bed looking as well as you do now. About noon next day they broke the door open, and sure enough there he was—lying right there!"

I replied: "My dear lady, won't you please knock on my door very early in the morning, and if I do not answer, open the door and walk in; for I fully expect to be dead."

A certain American lady, who was a missionary for

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some years in Liberia, tells how that when she landed, expecting to proceed to a station some distance inland, where she would join several other missionaries, she was met with the news that the missionaries of that station (four, I believe) had all died of fever a few days before she landed, one immediately after another. Nevertheless, the person who had the authority for her appointment escorted her to that desolate station and left her there alone. A partition of boards in the house was nearly all gone; it was only a few feet from the floor. She asked the explanation of this appearance and was told that the boards had been used to make coffins. Having received this interesting, though somewhat curious information, she was left alone to find what comfort she could in the reflection that there was enough of the partition left for one more coffin.

She told me about it herself—many years afterwards.

## II

### THE WISE ONES

**A**T Gaboon, in the French Congo, one sees all the successive stages in the process of civilization. First, there is the savage, whose whole apparel is a little palm-oil and a bit of calico half the size of a pocket-handkerchief; then there is the man who wears "two fathoms" of cloth wound about him gracefully and falling below his knees; next, there is the man who wears this same robe with a shirt; then the man who discards the native robe and wears a shirt and trousers, but with the shirt always outside the trousers; and, last of all, the gentleman who wears his shirt inside his trousers. These several classes are somewhat distinct. One does not classify the man with a taste for simplicity who wears a rice-sack with holes for his head and arms; nor the untutored dude who wears a pink Mother Hubbard or a lady's undergarment. These freakish modes represent attempts to hasten the process of civilization and to pass prematurely from one of the above classes to another.

In general, the distinction of *oulotte* and *sansculotte* indicates the difference between the Mpongwe—the old coast tribe—and the Fang—the interior tribe, who have only reached the coast in recent years. The Mpongwe is the most civilized of all the tribes south of the Calabar River. Many of them, besides wearing trousers, live in *deck-houses*, that is, houses with wooden floors. The first floor ever seen by the natives was the deck of an English ship; hence the name *deck-house*. It was also

from contact with English sailors that the native learned to speak of a "fathom" of cloth.

The Mpongwe are the proudest people of West Africa. An African woman is never allowed to marry into an inferior tribe; although the men may do so. And since the Mpongwe have no social equals among the adjacent tribes, it follows that no Mpongwe woman can marry outside of her own tribe, unless with a north-coast man or a white man. The Fang, the great interior tribe, are mere "bush-animals" in the mind of the Mpongwe. A Fang man, though he were perfectly civilized, and even educated in France, would not be allowed the social status of the meanest Mpongwe. The coast women can all speak Fang; for they trade with them and buy their daily food from them; but they are ashamed to be heard speaking it. Often when I addressed them in Fang they would shake their heads as if they had never heard the language before; whereupon I nearly always asked them a question on some matter of interest to themselves; the price of a parrot, for instance, if I knew that the lady was anxious to sell it. Such a question invariably made the dumb to speak.

The Mpongwe call themselves *The Wise Ones*. And other tribes generally admit their claim and take them at their own self-estimate. In former days, when they had real kings, they buried their kings in secret, not more than ten persons knowing the hidden grave, lest some other tribe might steal the body, for the sake of obtaining the brains, which would be a very powerful fetish and would make them wise like the Mpongwe.

The king was chosen from among the people by the elders and was selected for his wisdom. The ceremonies of his enthronement were such that he required not only wisdom, but also courage, physical strength and a superb digestion. The man's first intimation that he had been

chosen by the elders was an onrush of the people—not to do him honour, but to abuse and insult him. They would hurl opprobrious epithets at him, curse him, spit upon him, pelt him with mud and beat him. For, they said, from this time he would do all these things to them, while they would be powerless to retaliate. This, therefore, was their last chance. They also reminded him of all his failings in graphic and minute particulars. If the king survived this treatment, he was then taken to the former king's house, where he was solemnly invested with the insignia of the kingly office, in the shape of a silk hat. No one but the king was permitted to wear a silk hat.

Following the inauguration ceremony, the people came and bowed before the new king in humble submission, while they praised him as enthusiastically as they had before reviled him. Then he was fed and fêted for a week, during which time he was not allowed to leave his house, but was required to receive guests from all parts of his dominion and eat with them all. These ceremonies ended, he turned to the comparatively easy and commonplace duties of his kingly office. This custom, like many others, has passed away under the influence of civilization.

In former days the Mpongwe were divided into three distinct classes. There were, first, the slaves, the largest class of all. Then there was a middle class, of those who although free were of slave origin, or had some slave blood in their veins—even a drop. And then there was a very small aristocracy of pure Mpongwe.

Of these three classes the middle class probably had the hardest time. They had freedom enough for initiative and trade enterprise and they often became rich. But so sure as they did, they were at once an object of envy and class hatred on the part of the aristocracy, with the result that they were in constant danger of being accused

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of witchcraft and put to death, their goods being confiscated for the benefit of the governing class—the aristocracy.

Since slavery has been formally abolished by the French government the line between slaves and this middle class has almost disappeared—but not quite, for slavery has not been entirely abolished. But the “aristocracy” is as distinct as ever.

Domestic slavery is rarely attended with the usual horrors of alien enslavement. Mpongwe slaves were serfs rather than slaves. Until the advent of the white slaver they were rarely sold or exchanged. Mpongwe slaves were sometimes taken for debt and sometimes stolen from other tribes.

Several Mpongwe men have told me that their slaves were children of the interior whom they had rescued when their parents had thrown them away, either into the bush to perish by the beasts, or into the river. They must have been driven to this by some cruel superstition; for the African loves his children, and the mother of his children is his favourite wife. Perhaps the children were twins. In many tribes there is such a fear of twins that they are often put to death and their mother with them. In some of these tribes they are believed to be the result of adultery with a spirit.

Many former slaves have chosen to maintain the old relationship—somewhat modified—rather than accept full freedom, and be left without friends, family or possessions; a peculiar misfortune for those who have never had an opportunity to acquire a habit of independence.

At one time a man named Ndinga was working for me. He was a faithful workman, except for one inexplicable fault. Occasionally he would stay away half a day or the entire day without asking to be excused, or notifying me. Several times he did this when I was about to make

a trip up the river, and was depending upon him to make one of the crew. At length I dismissed him and he departed without explanation or complaint. But one of the other men came to me and told me Ndinga's plight. He was really the slave of an Mpongwe chief, right under the eyes of the government. The master allowed him to work for himself, but I imagine he took part of his wages. He also exercised the right to call upon him at any time for personal services, and each time that he had stayed away from his work he had been called by the master, who ignored my claim upon Ndinga and the consequent inconvenience to me, though he claimed to be my personal friend. Ndinga was sufficiently civilized to feel the degradation of his position, and the poor fellow submitted to rebuke and final dismissal rather than tell me he was a slave. I learned also that he had lost several other positions in the same way and had usually been dismissed with cursing and abuse. I sent for him immediately, and without explanation told him that I had changed my mind and that he could return to work. Meantime, I called the master, and reminding him that slavery was strictly forbidden, I told him that if he should again call Ndinga away from work I would notify the government. There was no further trouble.

This man, Ndinga, was in pitiable need of a friend. It is extremely easy for a slave to get a bad reputation, and Ndinga was said to be a "leopard-man," that is, a man who changes himself into a leopard—either in order to kill an enemy or devour a sheep. I have heard Ndinga accused of this frequently; and there were many who regarded him with great fear. Every hysterical woman who thought that she saw a leopard was ready to swear that it was Ndinga. If the leopards had been active in the community at that time all their doings would have been charged against him.

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The Mpongwe women are regarded as the best-looking and most graceful women on the entire coast. Wherever there are communities of white men, even hundreds of miles north and south of Gaboon, there are Mpongwe women ; for it is with them more than the women of any other tribe that white men form temporary alliances.

The Gaboon belle has a brown complexion and faultless skin, fine features and dreamy dark eyes with long lashes. She moves so easily that she carries her folded parasol, or bottle of gin, or other indispensable, on her head. She dresses her hair neatly and with great pains ; usually parting it in the middle and arranging it in numerous small braids which she fastens behind. Her dress is a large square robe of bright colours, often of fine material, wound around her, immediately below her arms, reaching to her feet and kept in place by a roll around the top of it—a peculiar twist of *leger de main* which only a black hand can perform. Somewhere in this roll her pipe is usually hidden away. This dress leaves her graceful shoulders and arms uncovered. She wears slippers with white stockings, and upon her head a very large silk handkerchief of bright colour, beautifully arranged in a turban. Add to this a lace or silk scarf thrown over one shoulder, not forgetting her silk parasol carried unopened on her head ; then add a lot of jewelry and plenty of perfume, and her attire is complete. Moreover, she has a soft voice, and does not yell except when she quarrels, and she seldom quarrels when she is dressed in her best. Most of the Christian women wear an unbelted wrapper, or Mother Hubbard.

The Mpongwe people are peculiarly gentle, and courteous in their manners ; and in this respect the men even surpass the women. Travelling in a boat with an Mpongwe crew, one is always surprised at their courtesy and thoughtful consideration. Courtesy, indeed, which

some one calls "benevolence in little things," is a racial characteristic. I was once obliged to make a very hard journey from Batanga to Benito, a hundred miles down the coast. For this purpose I purchased a bicycle in a German trading-house at Dualla, the capital of Kamerun. The bicycle weighed fifty pounds, and cost me a dollar a pound. I did not realize what I was undertaking. The sea-breeze was against me; portions of the beach were of soft sand and parts of it were so rough and rocky that I had to climb steep banks and stretches of rock, carrying the fifty-pound wheel on my shoulders. I had been long in Africa and my strength was greatly reduced. Several times, almost overcome with exhaustion, I threw myself down upon the beach and lay there for half an hour before I could go on. There were various misadventures along the way and a sensational escape from quicksand. It was an opportunity, however, to test the kindness of the native.

I took no food, but depended upon the hospitality of those to whom I was a stranger; although if hospitality had failed, I could have paid for food; but not once did it fail along the way. Wherever there was a stream to be waded, if a native was anywhere in sight, either on the beach, or fishing out on the sea, in his canoe, I called or beckoned to him, and he came and carried me over—for a white man must not get wet when he is exposed to the wind; then he went back and got my wheel. In one place the water was to the man's shoulders, and there was a current, but he held me in a horizontal position above his head, and exerting his whole strength, with firm, slow step he proceeded, and set me down dry on the other side. Then he cheerfully turned about and went after my wheel. In another place heavy crags projected into the sea and at high tide there was no beach for a quarter of a mile, so that I was compelled to carry the

wheel. At this place, I met a native carrying a load who was evidently returning from a journey to the interior ; and upon my request for help, he at once hid his load by the way and taking my wheel carried it over the rocks, nearly all this distance, to the better beach beyond. In every case I told the man beforehand that I did not expect to pay him for his service except in friendship, and friendship sufficed. Nor did I pay anything for my food ; and not once on the entire journey had I the least difficulty in procuring it. Some of these people were of other tribes ; but in courtesy the Mpongwe surpass them all.

They generally live at peace within the family and the village. The *men*, at least, rarely fight. Whenever I heard that an Mpongwe fight was in progress, I rushed to the scene ; but I must confess to mixed motives. For a fight among Mpongwe men is decidedly picturesque and entertaining, since they fight by butting each other in the stomach with their heads. The women are much more quarrelsome, and these very belles, whose beauty I have praised, have frequent quarrels and occasional fights, the latter usually involving a number of women ; for though the quarrel commences with two women, when it gets to a real fight the family and relations of each woman take part in it. From this moment it proceeds somewhat formally. They line up on two sides, and with a lively accompaniment of appropriate language, they rush upon each other, not usually striking, nor scratching, but each woman seeking to tear off her opponent's robe. I witnessed such a fight in which eighteen women engaged. A woman, when her robe is taken off, admits defeat. For this reason, instead of preparing for a fight by donning her oldest clothes, she prepares by putting on her newest and strongest, which she doubles and ties about her waist, letting it fall to her knees, but she wears no upper garment.

There is a strange war-custom in all the tribes of West Africa unlike anything I have ever heard of elsewhere. Sometimes when one of their number is killed, or a woman stolen by an enemy, instead of avenging his death directly they will kill some one of a third town which has nothing whatever to do with the palaver. This third town is then expected to join with them in punishing the first town, which, being the original offender, was the cause of all the trouble. In *The Jungle Folk of Africa* I have described this custom thus :

“Among the Mpongwe, in the old days before the foreign power was established, and among the closely related tribes south of them, this custom prevailed in an extreme form. A woman being stolen, the people of the offended town would hurry to another town near by, before the news had reached them, and would kill somebody. This town would then hurry to the next and kill somebody there, each town doing likewise until perhaps five or six persons of as many different towns would be killed in one night. The last town would then, with the help of the others, demand justice from the first. It may be that the object of this frightful custom was to restrain men from committing the initial crime, that might be attended with such wide-spread death, bringing upon themselves the curses of many people. For above all things the African cannot bear to be disliked and cannot endure execration.”

The Mpongwe now have no war-customs. And I am not sure that peace has proved an unmixed blessing. They have lost something of courage and virility.

Despite the veneer of civilization, I fear that this amiable and graceful people—excepting only the few Christians—are as superstitious as ever. Nature is still inhabited by myriad spirits to whose activity natural phenomena are due. They still speak of the great spirit

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who causes the flow and ebb of the tide by dropping an enormous stone into the sea and again removing it. Trial by ordeal is common even among the most intelligent. And not a death occurs among them that is not attributed to witchcraft.

A man dying in the hospital at Gaboon turns his solemn, beautiful eyes towards one who sits beside him, and tells in confidence what has brought about his death. It is strange how approaching death, as if to testify to man's divine origin in the hour of his most appalling defeat, dignifies the features and countenance of the lowest with a mysterious dignity that transcends all differences of colour, transforms even natural ugliness, and brings all men to one level. The greatest is no more than human ; the lowest is no less. This dying man tells how that some weeks past, having gone on a journey to a certain town forty miles north, and during the night having wondered what his friends at home might be doing, he thought he would visit Gaboon, leaving his body while his spirit alone travelled through the air. But on the way he met a company of spirits making a similar journey, one of whom was an enemy ; who, recognizing him, gave him a fatal thrust in the side. He quickly returned to his body ; but in the morning he felt the weakness resulting from the fatal stroke, and from that day had grown weaker and weaker until death was upon him.

I was present at the trial of a slave, in a leading Mpongwe town, who was accused of causing the death of one of the relations of the chief, a man who had been ill for a long time with tuberculosis. I had been calling on the sick man regularly. One day, going again to the town, I saw a crowd of people gathered in the street who were very much excited. The man had just died, and as usual the panic-stricken people were determined to blame somebody. The chief who was trying the case was a well-

educated man who had been closely associated with white people all his life and was prominent in trade. Arbitrary suspicion had about settled upon this slave—for slaves are always the first to be suspected—when a boy came forward and said that on the preceding night he had discovered the slave standing behind the sick man's house and that he had watched him while he opened a bundle of leaves which he had in his hand and in which was a piece of human flesh like a fish in size and form. No more evidence was necessary. No one asked the boy how he knew that it was not a fish which he had seen; nor how he knew that it was human.

They would have killed the man instantly but for their fear of the French government; for the town was close beside the capital. When I tried to reason with them, they answered me with the all-sufficient exclamation: "Ask the boy! Ask him yourself!" Those who took the leading part in this trial were dressed like Europeans.

Sickness and death, they believe, may be caused by fetish medicine, which need not be administered to the victim, but is usually laid beside the path where he is about to pass. Others may pass and it will do them no harm. The parings of finger-nails, the hair of the victim and such things are powerful ingredients in these "medicines." An Mpongwe, after having his hair cut, gathers up every hair most carefully and burns it lest an enemy should secure it and use it to his injury. When sickness continues for a length of time they usually conclude that some offended relation has caused an evil spirit to abide in the town.

An Mpongwe man, Ayenwe, had a severe attack of inflammatory rheumatism. I was going to see him regularly and doing what little I could for him. But his mother's people, who lived in a town four miles away, concluded that it was a spell of witchcraft, inflicted by

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his father's people. So they came one stormy night at midnight and stealing him out of his house, put him in a canoe and carried him on the rough sea to their town. The patient can always be prevailed upon by his relations, if there are enough of them to wear out his resistance. However strongly he may object at first he will finally throw up his hands and say : " Kill me if you will then. The responsibility is yours ; I have nothing more to do with it." A man's very soul is not his own in Africa.

An Mpongwe woman, Paia, was suffering greatly from salivation, through the injudicious use of calomel. She was a Christian woman and a member in the Mpongwe Church, although her relations were all heathen. She was in agony and a fellow missionary and myself had already reached the point where we could do nothing more for her. The numerous heathen relations were all present. They sat on the floor smoking and expectorating in gloomy silence, with the windows closed, and filled the house so that I could hardly pass in and out. I tried my best to get them to take Paia to the French hospital, but they were horrified at the bare suggestion. The tales in free circulation concerning the hospital—poisons administered by the doctor, mutilation, and death by slow torture—would fill a volume. Several days passed : Paia was worse. They concluded that the house was bewitched—and perhaps the whole town—and resolved to carry her away to another town, across the river. In such cases it is advisable to put a body of water between the victim and the bewitched town. Paia told me that she was more than willing to go to the hospital if they would let her ; but she said they would never consent. Next morning about daylight I suddenly appeared before her door with four strong men and a hammock swung on a pole. Before her relations knew what had happened





WOMEN'S SECRET SOCIETY OF GABOON.

one of the men had carried her out to the hammock, and we started to the hospital. The French doctor, one of the very best on the coast, at my request gave her special attention, and in a few days she was well.

The lowest reach of Mpongwe degradation is represented by the woman's secret society, to which a majority of the Mpongwe women belong—practically all, except the Christians, who regard it with abhorrence. I know of nothing in any interior tribe more degrading and immoral. In former times of cruelty and oppression the society probably served for the protection of women against their husbands; but in these times it is the husbands who need protection, and the society, having outlived its usefulness, has degenerated. The women of the society frequently meet together at night, usually in an arbour of palms, and sing unspeakably lewd songs—phallic songs—which are heard all over the village. There is always a crowd of young men gathered around the arbour; and the badinage which passes between them and the women is shocking. And yet these same persons, on all other occasions in their daily intercourse, observe a degree of decorum which would astonish those who think that there is scarcely any such thing as decorum in Africa.

### III

#### A DYING TRIBE

**T**HIS amiable and attractive people, the Mpongwe tribe, is now but a dying remnant, hurrying to extinction. It is not long since they were numbered by tens of thousands; now there are probably not more than five hundred pure Mpongwe. There are women among them for whom marriage is impossible. For, as I have already said, their social superiority makes it impossible for them to marry into other tribes; but, within their own tribe, many Mpongwe women are related, nearly or remotely, to every surviving family, and the very strict laws of consanguinity forbid the marriage of related persons. It is expected, therefore, that these women will make their alliances with white men; that is, that they will not marry at all.

The first exterminating factor was slavery. Sir Harry Johnston, in *The Civilization of Africa*, has this to say in regard to the fatal adaptability of the Negro to a condition of slavery :

“The Negro in general is a born slave. He is possessed of physical strength, docility, cheerfulness of disposition, a short memory for sorrows and cruelties, and an easily aroused gratitude for kindness and just dealing. He does not suffer from homesickness to the overbearing extent that afflicts other peoples torn from their homes, and, provided he is well fed, he is easily made happy. Above all, he can toil hard under the hot sun and in the unhealthy climates of the torrid zone. He has little or

no race-fellowships—that is to say, he has no sympathy for other Negroes ; he recognizes and follows his master independent of any race affinities, and as he is usually a strong man and a good fighter, he has come into request not only as a labourer but as a soldier.”

Sir Harry, speaking as an eye-witness of the capturing and the exportation of slaves, gives a lurid description of their sufferings, which, he says, “were so appalling that they almost transcend belief.” He makes a conservative estimate that in the modern period of the slave-traffic twenty million Africans must have been sold into slavery. The Mpongwe was one of the tribes that suffered most. A large portion of their country was depopulated. The slave-traffic was frightfully demoralizing to the Africans themselves. It excited fiendish passions, stifled every instinct of humanity and inspired craft and cruelty far surpassing anything hitherto known. It was said that three men of the same family dared not leave their town together lest two of them should combine to sell the third.

More than half a century has passed since the last slave ship sailed out of Gaboon harbour and disappeared over the western horizon with its cargo of grief and rage, many of them wailing vengeance in a mournful chant, improvising the words as they sang. For the African sings his bitterest grief as well as his joy. He sings where the white man would weep, or curse ; but to the accustomed ear no cry could equal the pity of his song.

It was in this region that Du Chaillu hunted the gorilla and gathered much of the material for his famous books. An interior chief, in appreciation of Du Chaillu’s visit to his town, once presented him with a fat slave ; and when Du Chaillu kindly declined the offer, protesting that he would not know what to do with him, the chief exclaimed in astonishment : “You must kill him and eat him, of course.”

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Du Chaillu spat violently upon the ground—the African way of expressing disgust and abhorrence.

“Then,” said the bewildered chief, “what do you do with all our people who are sent down the river and far away to your country? We have believed that you fatten them and eat them.”

It is supposed that our present mission station was formerly the site of a slave pen, where slaves were kept until they were shipped—a *barracoon*; hence the name *Baraka*.

The slave-traffic was succeeded by the rum-traffic; and it would not be easy to say which of the two has proved the greater evil for Africa. There is more drunkenness in Gaboon, among the Mpongwe, than in most places on the coast. Except among the few Christians, an abundance of rum is used at every marriage and every funeral and both men and women drink to drunkenness. The women drink as much as the men, and there are a greater number of hopeless dipsomaniacs among them.

One day, as I was walking along the beach, I met a bright-looking Mpongwe woman who surprised me by addressing me in English. I was eager to know who she was. She said her name was Elida Harrington, and that when she was very young the wife of one of our missionaries, for whom she had been working, took her to America when she went on furlough and that during the period of the furlough she had attended school in America. Those early days were evidently a sweet memory, and Elida's face was aglow with pleasure as she told me. Finally I asked her why I had never seen her at the mission. The glow faded from her face, and after a moment of gloomy silence she replied: “You'll know soon enough.”

I afterwards learned that Elida, when she was young, was married to a man who was given to *nagging*. He was

continually making petty and groundless charges of infidelity against his wife. There is no surer way to inspire the dislike of the African. They are wonderfully generous in forgiving impulsive cruelty, but continual nagging will alienate them. At last, just to spite her husband, Elida told him that all his charges were true ; that she had done all those things, and much worse—such things as he had never thought of charging against her. Her husband, when he recovered from a paroxysm of rage and astonishment, told her to pack her things and leave his house ; to which she quietly replied that she would be glad to do so, since she had already decided upon that very course.

Soon after my first meeting with Elida I called at her house. It was then that I learned why she kept away from the mission. She was so intoxicated that she could not get to the door. And this was habitual.

One day Elida went to see her sister Jane, who was sick in bed. Jane wanted some bread and gave her the price of a loaf and asked her to go out and buy it for her. Poor Jane never got the bread. And poor Elida ! She went only as far as the first rum-shop.

I think of another, a young man who bore an honoured name, *Augustus Boardman*, and who from his childhood was closely connected with the mission. He spoke English not like an African but as if it were his native tongue. I never knew a native who understood the finer feelings of white people as Augustus did. I never knew a native who had in himself so much of what we call *sentiment*. On one occasion he went with me to Angom where Mr. Marling was buried. Mr. Marling, who had been dead for five years, was the missionary whom Augustus had known best and loved most. In the evening, just before leaving for the coast, I happened to pass Mr. Marling's grave, and there I saw a beautiful wreath of flowers care-

fully woven, which Augustus had laid upon the grave. The African is strangely indifferent to flowers, and I have never known another who would have done what Augustus did.

On another occasion I received a letter from him when he was up the Ogowè River. He wrote that while visiting at our old mission on the Ogowè he had come across an English song-book, in which he had found a song, the words of which were the most beautiful he had ever read in his life; so beautiful that he had committed them to memory; and he was wondering whether it was well known and commonly sung among English-speaking people. He copied the words of the entire song and enclosed them in the letter. The song was *The Lost Chord*. The anguish of the lost chord in his own life was the secret of the deep impression that the song made upon him.

In America a child can be kept out of the way of the worst temptations until he has reached years of discretion, but such separation is impossible in Africa. This boy, when he was a little child, was taught to drink rum; his mother died a hopeless victim of it; and by the time he was a young man the appetite for it was insatiable and complete master of him. The finer feelings which characterized him seemed to make him all the more the victim of this inordinate desire. He fought it as he might have fought a python of his native jungles, but in vain. On one occasion, in the presence of Mr. Marling, he pledged himself with the solemnity of an oath never to taste it again. A few days afterwards he was walking down the street of an interior town when most unexpectedly he met a boy with a bottle of rum. He sprang at the boy, snatched the bottle from him and drank the contents. Other efforts ended similarly. He afterwards made such promises to me,

weeping and fairly prostrated with shame and humiliation; yet he soon fell again. He became at length quite hopeless, and it was necessary to dismiss him from all service in the mission. He got several good positions, but lost them immediately. When I last saw him he was a moral wreck and almost an outcast even in Africa, where there are no outcasts. Augustus has since died; one more victim of poisoned rum.

*He is full of compassion and plenteous in mercy.* And, knowing Augustus as I knew him, I dare to hope that he has again at last heard the long-lost chord, and the sound of the great *Amen*.

The native is constitutionally incapable of being a moderate drinker. And, besides, drunkenness is not disgraceful; they have not the spirit that revolts from it. I have personally seen little children intoxicated. I have seen them intoxicated in the schoolroom. I have known of parents getting their own children to drink to intoxication for their amusement. It is doubtful whether there is another tribe in all West Africa so besotted with alcoholism as the Mpongwe. Physicians agree that it is one of the chief causes of their increasing sterility.

Another factor in the extermination of the Mpongwe is the demoralization of domestic life incident to methods of trade. The Mpongwe man is a trader by instinct. In shrewdness and diplomacy I doubt whether he has a superior among all the tribes of West Africa. This shrewdness he expresses in many homely proverbs; as, for example, when he says: "If you must sleep three in a bed, sleep in the middle." White traders all along the coast employ the Mpongwe as middlemen between them and the interior people, who possess the export products. The white man gives the middleman a certain quantity of goods on trust. With these he goes to the interior and establishes a small trading-post in one or

several towns. It is a life of privation and danger, a lonely, miserable existence, but he endures it with patience for the joyful hope that at the end of a year or two he may return to his beloved town and family in Gaboon, so rich that he can afford to "rip" for six months; to dress so that the women will adore him and the men hate him. His goods being soon exhausted by his numerous relations as well as himself, he starts off for another year or two. He has a wife, or wives, at Gaboon, and he takes to himself a wife or two at each of his interior trading-centres.

In the dangers of these middlemen and the necessities of trade Miss Mary H. Kingsley finds a plausible argument for polygamy, amounting, in Miss Kingsley's opinion, to a full justification. Indeed, for various reasons, the majority of traders defend and advocate native polygamy. The journeys of these native traders to the interior are dangerous, and I agree with Miss Kingsley that they deserve credit for their courage. "Certainly they run less risk of death from fever than a white man would; but, on the other hand, their colour gives them no protection; and their chance of getting murdered is distinctly greater; the white governmental powers cannot revenge their death in the way they would the death of a white man, for these murders usually take place away in some forest region, in a district no white man has ever penetrated."

There are two reasons why so many of them nevertheless survive. The first is that trade follows definite routes and the trader is expected about once in six months by all the towns along the way, in which the people are eager for trade-goods, the men "fairly wild for tobacco" and the women impatient for beads and other ornaments. Under these circumstances, for the people of any one town to kill the trader would mean

trouble between that town and the other towns along the route.

But this consideration alone is not sufficient ; and Miss Kingsley gives us the means that he employs for his further safety, as follows : " But the trader is not yet safe. There is still a hole in his armour, and this is only to be stopped up in one way, namely, by wives ; for you see, although the village cannot safely kill him and take all his goods, they can still let him die safely of a disease, and take part of them, passing on sufficient stuff to the other villages to keep them quiet. Now the most prevalent disease in the African bush comes out of the cooking-pot, and so to make what goes into the cooking-pot—which is the important point, for earthen pots do not in themselves breed poison—safe and wholesome, you have got to have some one who is devoted to your health to attend to the cooking affairs ; and who can do this like a wife ?—one in each village of the whole of your route. I know myself one gentleman whose wives stretch over 300 miles of country, with a good wife base in a coast town as well. This system of judiciously conducted alliances gives the black trader a security nothing else can, because naturally he marries into influential families at each village, and all the wife's relations on the mother's side regard him as one of themselves and look after him and his interests. That security can lie in woman, especially so many women, the so-called civilized man may ironically doubt, but the security is there, and there only, and on a sound basis ; for remember that the position of a travelling trader's wife in a village is a position that gives the lady prestige, the discreet husband showing little favours to her family and friends, if she asks for them while he is with her ; and then she has not got the bother of having a man always about the house, and liable to get all sorts of silly notions into his head, if she speaks to an-

other gentleman, and then go and impart these notions to her with a cutlass, or a kassengo, as the more domestic husband, I am assured by black ladies, is prone to.”<sup>1</sup>

This picture is not untrue to the facts. And yet some of us who have old-fashioned ideas of morality are not convinced that polygamy is thereby justified with its beastly immorality on the part of those men and of all those women who prefer not to have husbands hanging about the house with silly notions—that is to say, *moral* notions—about the behaviour of women. And however heartrending may be the condition of those interior men and women, without tobacco and without beads, we cannot agree that their necessity justifies any such degrading practice for its relief. As for the slight excess of rubber and ivory that civilized folks obtain by this means, it may soothe the civilized breast to know that all, or nearly all, this trade produce would reach the coast in other and more legitimate ways without these middlemen, whose presence is a curse to the interior people, whose absence is a curse to their own tribe, and who are above all a curse to themselves.

This demoralization of domestic life is even worse for the Mpongwe women than for their absent husbands. There is a large settlement of white men in Gaboon, most of them government officials. And because of the climate the white population is always rapidly changing. Nearly all the Mpongwe women become the mistresses of those men. And the worst of it is that instead of being deemed disgraceful this only gives them social prestige among their own people. A woman said to me one day :

“Iga is so proud she won’t speak to me any more.”

“Why?” I asked.

“Oh, she is living with a white man now,” was the reply.

<sup>1</sup> *Travels in West Africa*, p. 252.

The marriage tie in Gaboon has long ceased to be a "tie." It was much more binding before the advent of the white man, and it is more binding to-day among the uncivilized Fang.

The dreadful diseases that have been imported into Africa are certainly a factor in the extermination of the Mpongwe. But the subject is too unpleasant to discuss at length in this place.

Again, the disregard of native institutions and the destruction of tribal authority by the foreign government tends to break down all authority and remove all moral restraints. This is more or less true in all West Africa. The native form of government among the Mpongwe is somewhat patriarchal; authority belongs to the head of the family, the head of the clan and the head of the tribe. The native reverence for the authority of these men is the saving virtue that sustains the tribe. But the chief's authority and this reverence are destroyed together when the people see him tied up occasionally and flogged; or ruthlessly flung into prison; or his authority superseded by that of a native policeman. The kingly office goes begging for an occupant when men find that the grandeur of royalty consists in being held more or less responsible for all the misdoings of all the tribe, while, perhaps, some black mistress of a government official has more real power than the native king.

The authority of custom, in former times, even exceeded the authority of kings. But the foreigner ignores native customs, or ridicules them, or even condemns and forbids them—often without understanding them. The tribal customs of Africa, from the most trivial to the most revolting, are not arbitrary, but have a moral meaning and significance; though they sometimes outlive their usefulness. They either embody such rude justice as the African has attained; or else they represent the opera-

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tion of the law of self-preservation. One can give a rational explanation even of the most cruel and revolting custom that I have ever known in Africa, namely, the custom of burying a man's wives alive with him when he dies. Africa abounds with deadly poisons, and African wives frequently contract an unpleasant habit of using them in the cooking-pot. How common the practice is may be judged by the African proverb: "We don't eat out of the same dish," used for instance as follows: "So-and-so is angry but what do I care? We don't eat out of the same dish." The wife prepares her husband's food and has the daily opportunity of using this deadly weapon. But this burial custom—the fact that when he dies she will be buried with him—gives her a personal interest in keeping him alive. It is scarcely necessary to say that I think that this custom ought to be suppressed and its observance severely punished. But meantime something ought to be done to improve the morals of the African wife.

The dowry paid for a wife among the Mpongwe is forty dollars. Among the uncivilized Fang it is several times this amount, although the Fang are very poor in comparison. The Mpongwe dowry was reduced by the French government as a step in the direction of its abolishment; for it is nothing more than a purchase price. But the result of this forced reduction of the dowry has been demoralization rather than civilization. The custom among all tribes is that if a wife desert her husband her family must pay back the dowry or send back the wife. It is not easy to send back a large dowry, and the people, being unable or unwilling to do it, will send the woman back unless she has a very strong case against her husband. But forty dollars can easily be raised, especially if there should be several white men to help. So there is nothing to prevent the Mpongwe woman from

leaving her husband when she pleases ; and it pleases her to change him frequently. Until the African attains the moral sentiment that makes the marriage bond sacred it is better that there should be the bond of outright purchase and ownership rather than no marriage at all.

It is so with the whole body of custom. It expresses the inward life of the people. It contains such rudimentary morality as they know, or embodies a principle that is necessary for the preservation of society. It is on the level of the African's moral culture. It corresponds with his beliefs and has the consent of his mind. The foreigner may by sheer force change his outward condition, but unless there be also a corresponding inward change he does not respond to the new obligations ; his moral responsibility is not equal to the new demands, and the result is moral degeneration followed inevitably by physical degeneration.

This very matter of the dowry illustrates the different method of the missionary and, I believe, the true principle of progress. Our early missionaries made no church laws against the dowry, but they faithfully preached the equality of woman and the higher idea of marriage ; and as the Christians became imbued with this sentiment they themselves abolished the dowry within their own society. But they did it at the instance of a moral sentiment which made marriage more secure than ever. The inward preceded the outward change. The missionary does as much harm as anybody else when he adopts the easy method of ruthless and indiscriminate assaults upon native customs and beliefs. It was not the Master's method. Even slavery Jesus did not attack with violence ; that were as vain—if I may use the illustration of Dr. Richard Storrs—as vain as to attack an Arctic ice-field with pick and drill ; but He turned upon it the summer sunshine and it slowly melted away. He in-

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spired men with a sentiment of human brotherhood and destroyed slavery by expelling the spirit that made it possible. The African has a rooted antipathy to the pick and drill, but he loves the sunshine ; he is responsive to truth and capable of high and transforming affections.

It is said on the coast that England rules her African colonies for *commerce*, France for *revenue* and Spain for *plunder*. The English policy gives the utmost encouragement to native enterprise and thrift, and on the whole the English colonies are the most prosperous and promising. The French policy of revenue imposes such a burden of taxation that life no longer consists in eating and drinking and talking palavers, but in paying taxes. And the enormous import and export duty stifles enterprise and in the end defeats its own purpose. But it must be said that the French officials, of all classes, in their personal intercourse with the natives, are free and friendly, and in consequence are much better liked than the English officials, who, though usually just, are often arrogant, and, while they care for the welfare of the native, care nothing for his feelings. One recalls that in the early days of America the French got on with the Indians much better than the English.

The German policy cannot be described in one word. Their policy is commercial ; but they love government for its own sake and they govern far too much. There is an element of militarism in their rule that is entirely too rigorous for the African, and must ultimately destroy him unless it becomes modified through knowledge and experience. It is certain that Germany has not yet solved the problems of colonial government in Africa. Some years have passed since I lived in Kamerun and it may be that conditions have improved—though I doubt it ; but it used to be that the first visible institution of government in a new district was the whipping-post.



**TRADING HOUSE AT GABOON.**  
The beach strewn with logs of mahogany in preparation for shipment



Whatever Germany does she does with all her might, and the activity of this institution made the proximity of a government station an undesirable neighbourhood if one chanced to have a human heart. The outpost of civilization in Africa is frequently a whipping-post.

The fatal defect, both of trade and government, as independent civilizing agencies, is that they have forcibly altered the outward conditions of the native without changing the inward man. The African is somewhat in the position of the poor Indian in our own country a few generations ago. He was a hunter in a land stripped of game, a warrior deprived of arms and obliged henceforth to seek his rights by legal technicalities—while he was still the very same old Indian, inwardly not a whit better, and by no means equal to the demands and moral obligations which the new conditions imposed upon him. One may clip the claws of the tiger and even pull his teeth, but he is still a tiger ; and a French uniform on an African cannibal does not make him a vegetarian.

## IV

### A LIVING REMNANT

**T**HE diminishing number of the Mpongwe, the hostility of the climate, the insistence by the government that French must be the language of the schools, the great difficulty of procuring a corps of French-speaking missionaries, the curse of rum, the presence of a large community of white men and the natural irresponsibility of the white man in Africa—all these have combined to limit the work of our mission among the Mpongwe and to make it exceedingly difficult. And besides, there is, especially, the strong opposition of the French Jesuits who have a large mission in Gaboon and any number of missionaries that the work may demand. Their hostility makes coöperation impossible. Their methods, of course, are Jesuitical. We have the authority of certain historians for the statement that in the early days of missions among the American Indians the Jesuit Fathers taught the Iroquois of Canada that Jesus was a big Indian Chief who scalped women and children. If that was ever true—and I doubt it—their object of course was to gain first the outward adherence of the Indian, submission to their authority, with the intention of afterwards instructing him in the full content of Christianity, as they understood it. The French Jesuits, perhaps with the same good intention, have baptized nearly all the polygamy, drunkenness, immorality and fetishism of Gaboon, and they call it *Christianity*. But I believe it is more inaccessible to moral and spiritual influence than it was before.

One day shortly after the news of the death of Pope Leo XIII reached Gaboon, and before I had heard of it, I was passing along the beach when I heard in a small village the *ululu* of women who were wailing for the dead. Their mourning has usually a local occasion, and I had no doubt but that somebody was dead in their own village; so I hurried over. The mourning ceased abruptly at my approach—a triumph of curiosity over grief. When I asked who was dead, the leader answered: “The Pope!” She followed the answer with a prolonged howl in which they all joined, and the tearless mourning proceeded. That is how I learned of the death of Leo XIII.

The Protestant Christians of Gaboon are a very small community; but they are the best Christians, and the dearest people, I have known in Africa. They alone, of the Mpongwe, have good-sized families of healthy children. They are the living remnant of a dying tribe.

When I moved to Baraka the Mpongwe work, the oldest in the mission, was in charge of a fellow missionary, Mr. Boppell, and I had not expected to take any part in it. But before the first year had passed, Mr. Boppell’s health compelled him to leave Africa, his wife having died at the beginning of the year. From that time I had charge of the Gaboon Church, besides the work among the Fang. In particular I undertook the training of an Mpongwe candidate for the ministry, who since Mr. Boppell’s departure was occupying the pulpit and preaching very acceptably. This man, Iguwi, I instructed four hours each week; but after most of the year had passed, I felt that I could perhaps spend the time to better advantage.

Iguwi was the best educated and the most eccentric man of the entire Mpongwe tribe. He was a monk by nature. The African is distinctly a marrying man. He is usually very much married. But Iguwi at the age of

forty-five was still single and was therefore a mystery to the natives. He and myself were the only two single men in the entire region of Gaboon. My own case seemed strange enough to the natives. They never lost an opportunity of asking me for an explanation. "Mr. Milligan," says a wistful and sympathetic inquirer, "you nebber get wife?"

"No, I nebber get one."

After a period of silence:

"Well, Mr. Milligan, why you nebber get wife? You no have money for buy her? or she done lef' you and run 'way wid odder man?"

In reply to these frequent queries, I gave so many answers that I have almost forgotten which was the right one.

Iguwi was the only African I have ever known who was not a marrying man. I have known other single men among them, but they were either busy laying plans to run away with some other man's wife, or were working day and night and stealing, according to opportunity, to obtain sufficient dowry.

Iguwi was extremely bashful; and in this also he was an exception to his race. On one occasion, an elder of the church and his wife, intimate friends of Iguwi, invited him to a chicken breakfast. They lived beside him and he passed their house several times a day. Nevertheless, he replied in a letter that he hoped they would excuse him on account of his bashfulness; but that he would be very grateful if they would send him his portion of the chicken. Iguwi was born in slavery, and as he became educated and somewhat cultivated he was very sensitive in regard to his birth. This indeed may account largely for his bashfulness.

But quite as prominent as Iguwi's bashfulness and quaint eccentricities was his transparent sincerity and goodness. His religion had not the African tendency to

exhaust itself in mental transports. The poor always had a friend in him. I have had to remonstrate with him for giving away all that he had. On one occasion, he came to me and asked the monthly payment of his salary in advance. I expressed surprise at his need of it, seeing that only a few days before I had paid him for the past month. But I found afterwards that he had expended the whole month's payment in helping a poor widow to repair her house. She was not in any way related to him ; and she had relations who were able to help her ; but she had a sharp tongue and had turned them away from her, and when poverty and distress came there was none to help her. The most degraded of the heathen believed in Iguwi and would never have doubted his honesty or truth. In this sense, indeed, he was a "living epistle" of Christ which all could read and which none misunderstood. For so gentle a spirit he had a set of categories that were especially drastic. On one occasion, when I asked him how many persons had attended his village prayer-meeting, he replied : "Fifteen Christians and six sinners." The attendance on the preceding Sunday was "ninety Christians and twenty-five sinners."

Iguwi was a remarkably good preacher. He had been taught in the mission school at Baraka in the old days when English was still permitted, but at best he received there only the equivalent of a primary-school education. After he decided to study for the ministry he received further training in a theological class. It was a mystery to me how a man so bashful and diffident had ever chosen the ministry for a profession. But when Iguwi stood on the platform his diffidence disappeared entirely and his speech was perfectly free and courageous. The people all enjoyed his preaching and were helped by it. He was so absent-minded, however, in regard to his dress, that a committee should have been appointed to look

him over before he went into the pulpit, in order to see that nothing essential had been omitted, and that his clothes were fastened on him securely. A perpetual problem to the native mind is how to get clothes to stay on without buttons—a problem of which polite African society anxiously awaits the solution. Even with buttons, the imported garments of civilization are still uncertain, when worn by those who are not to the manner born. Sometimes, as if by a sudden act of disenchantment, the buttons simultaneously unfasten, strings untie and clothes fall off. Iguwi's trousers were supported by a red sash, which often got loose and began to unwind slowly as he preached. When the loose end of the sash touched the floor, it was a question as to what the climax of the sermon would be. I finally advised him either to preach shorter sermons or wear a longer sash.

Iguwi's sermons were thoughtful and spiritual. It was strange how so unpractical a man could preach such practical sermons. They must have come to him by intuition rather than by any exercise of judgment. It was also indicative of a remarkable intellect that a man without any library, who had read only a few books that he had borrowed from missionaries, could preach sermons that were always well constructed and thoughtful. I happen to recall an outline which he submitted to me one day on the text, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." His three main points were: First, The Spirit leads to the cross of Christ; second, He leads to moral conflict (Iguwi probably said to "war"); third, He leads to victory.

When I was leaving Africa, I gladdened Iguwi's heart with a set of Matthew Henry's commentaries—which more than doubled his library. The quaintness, the homely simplicity and spirituality of Matthew Henry were not unlike Iguwi himself.

I have said that outside the pulpit Iguwi, with all his goodness, was utterly unpractical. Often, indeed, he seemed to lack common sense. I once gave him a book to read in which the writer, by way of illustrating the evanescence of human glory, referred to the gorgeous palace of ice which was built by Catherine of Russia, and so soon dissolved beneath the sun. Iguwi had heard of ice and knew very well what it was, but being unfamiliar with its resources of illustration he was deeply impressed. While he was still reading this book, one night in prayer-meeting he offered a prayer in which I, who did not understand the Mpongwe language, was suddenly startled by the English words, *ice, palace, Catherine, Russia*.

Even if the congregation had known English the illustration would still have been unintelligible to them. For aught they knew *Russia* might be the name of an African tribe, or a river in America, and they were as ignorant of the other words; and since those four words comprised the whole illustration, the force and beauty of it must have been somewhat lost upon them. It occurred to me at the time that a library, instead of being a help to Iguwi, would probably have spoiled his preaching.

Iguwi was so unpractical it seemed best not to ordain him. If the worst heathen of Gaboon had asked admission to the membership of the church Iguwi would have received him with a *God-bless-you*. But he continued to visit the sick and to give away his living to the poor. His goodness shone along all the lowly paths of service.

A service in the Gaboon Church is much like a service in one of our best coloured churches in America. There is perfect order and good attention, and we need not labour too much to be simple, for they listen intelligently. Occasionally, however, one is reminded that it is really Africa and not America. I have seen a man, in the first pair of shoes that he ever possessed, come to

church unusually late, tramp as heavily as reverence would allow in coming up the aisle, and then sit in the end of the seat, assuming an unnatural and uncomfortable position in order to keep his feet in the aisle. What is the use of spending money for shoes and wearing them with so much discomfort if people are not to know that you have them? Shoes for the African trade are purposely made with loud-squeaking soles; the African will not buy shoes that do not "talk." Sometimes, in localities further from the coast, the head of the family will enter the church alone, wearing the shoes, and upon reaching his seat will throw them out of the window to his wife, who also will wear them into the church, and perhaps others of the family after her.

Among the Mpongwe it was deeply impressed upon me that the sincerity of piety is not to be judged by its fluency. Most white people who acquire the art of public speaking, especially in religious meetings, are obliged to cultivate it; and only a small minority of Christians can offer a prayer in public. But the African speaks with perfect freedom and entire absence of self-consciousness. He can offer a public prayer long before he becomes Christian, or has any such intention. It took me a long time to put the proper estimate upon fluency. One day I visited a woman, Nenge, who was going further and further astray through rum and other Mpongwe vices. I was so greatly impressed by her eloquent expression of ideals and aspirations that I inferred a great change in her life. I prayed with her and asked her if she would pray for herself. Without the slightest hesitation she began a prayer of considerable length that almost brought tears to my eyes. She prayed for herself and me. But I found out afterwards that she had not the least intention of parting with either of her great sins, and she was surprised that I had so misunder-

stood her. She had not meant to deceive me. The truth is that any native could offer such a prayer. After several such experiences I became wary. It is a great gift, however, when it is truly consecrated. An Mpongwe prayer-meeting never lags.

The Gaboon Church in its early history was ministered to for many years by Toko Truman, probably the most eloquent native preacher who was ever trained in the West Africa Mission. He was entirely blind for seven years before he died. The first time I visited Gaboon Toko was still living. I was on my way home to America and was detained several days at Gaboon, waiting for a French steamer. I had heard much of Toko, and I visited him every day. Among ever so many incidents of interest which he related I recall his reply to a certain white trader, a very profane man, who took pleasure in mocking at Toko's faith and self-denial. One day the trader remarked that if there was any such place as heaven, he himself was as sure of an entrance there as anybody.

Toko replied : " I have read the words of Jesus, ' Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven,' that is to say, not even all those who pray shall enter ; and the chances would seem to be small for you, who do not pray at all. Heaven is not as cheap as you think."

Izuri is an elderly woman, a member in the Mpongwe Church, whose charity towards the Fang of the interior presents a striking contrast to the spirit of the coast people generally. I have already said that, in the mind of the coast people, the Fang belong to the orders of lower animals, and that the coast women are ashamed to be heard speaking Fang, though they all speak it ; for they trade with them daily. Izuri, when I had charge of the Mpongwe Church, was sewing for a trading-house one

whole day each week, thereby earning twenty cents, which she gave to help support a native missionary among the Fang. The Fang come down the river long distances to sell food and building material in the Gaboon market. They must travel with the tide, and often they remain at the coast all night. It is sometimes hard for them to obtain shelter; and, moreover, they are subjected to every form of temptation by those who would get from them the money or goods they have procured for their produce. Izuri might often be seen going along the beach in the evening, inviting these homeless people to her town where she gave them shelter in a house which she owned but did not occupy. And often in the evening, sitting down in their midst, she would talk to them in their own language, fairly scandalizing her neighbours. I presume Izuri still continues her ministry to the poor Fang.

An Mpongwe man, Ntyango, showed this same spirit towards the Fang and went among them and preached to them. He died about the time I went to Gaboon, and was buried in the mission graveyard. Some years afterwards the workmen were cutting grass in the graveyard. Among them was a Fang man named Biyoga, whom Ntyango had taught to read when he was a small boy. As Biyoga was cutting grass and occasionally spelling out the names on the tombstones he found Ntyango's name on one of them. Sacred memories stirred the heart of the wild Fang. The next day he came to me and told me that since the days, long ago, when he had known Ntyango he had never met another man like him. All the time since finding his name and while working beside his grave he had been thinking of him, recalling his kindness to the Fang, especially to the children, and his Christian teaching, and now he wished only to be the kind of man that Ntyango was.





AN MPONGWE WEDDING.  
The bride is a daughter of Lucina, who stands at the left of the bride.

I think of Sara whose honesty and goodness had beautified her face. Left a widow with five young children, and very poor, she often felt the burden of care too heavy for her shoulders ; but she went bravely on. When her daughter was married and the customary dowry of forty dollars was offered Sara by the young husband, she refused to take it, believing that it was not in accord with Christian principle. The king of the Mpongwe tribe, being jealous for old customs, resented Sara's action, and having invited her to his town made her a prisoner, thinking to intimidate her ; but he failed even to pick a quarrel with her, and after a few days he released her.

I think of Lucina, than whom the Mpongwe Church never had a more faithful member. Lucina's husband, preferring a dissolute life of drunkenness and polygamy, left her with five young children. Indeed, when he took other wives he had to leave her ; for her character embraced the sensibility as well as the faithfulness of Christian wifehood. She brought up her children under great difficulties, working for them like a very slave ; and though she was young, educated and extremely attractive, the breath of scandal never tarnished her reputation. When her husband accepted a dowry for their daughter and sent a portion of it to Lucina, she sent it back to him saying that if he had sold their daughter for a price, her conscience would not allow her to share it with him.

And, among others, there was Sonia, a white-haired old man with the heart of a child. Sonia had as many stories as *Uncle Remus* ; but his best stories were the incidents and adventures of his own life.

One still night as we lay at anchor, in the middle of the swift-rolling river, with the moonshine lying in silver ringlets across its surface, the boat-boys asked Sonia to tell them a story. As usual his first reply was that he did not know any stories—excepting a few foolish old

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stories that they had heard till they were tired of them. But at length—as usual—he thought of one, and then another, and still another.

He first told a typical story about the tortoise and his creditors. The tortoise in African folk-lore is notorious for unscrupulous cunning.

Once upon a time there was a great famine in the land and food was very dear. So the tortoise called upon his friends, the worm, the cock, the bushcat, the leopard and the hunter, and borrowed from each a box of brass rods, promising to pay them at the end of the season on different days. On the day appointed the worm appeared and asked for the payment of the loan. Then the tortoise asked him to wait until he should go and fetch the money. So the tortoise went off to get the money, and the next day he came back with the cock, who also came according to appointment for the payment of his loan. Then the worm and the cock met, and the cock ate the worm.

Then the cock asked for his money and the tortoise asked him to wait until he should go and fetch it. And he went off again, and came back next day with the bushcat, who had come for the payment of his loan. Then the cock and the bushcat met and the bushcat killed the cock and ate him.

Then the bushcat asked for his money and the tortoise asked him to wait until he should go and fetch it. And he went off again, and came back the next day with the leopard, and the leopard killed the bushcat and ate it.

Then the leopard asked for his money, and the tortoise asked him to wait until he should go and fetch it. And he went off again, and came back with the hunter. And the hunter and the leopard killed each other.

Then the tortoise laughed at them all for being fools. And the moral is that it is not wise to lend to a man lest he may wish you evil and seek to kill you. But Sonia

reminds the boys that the story contains only the wisdom of the heathen, and that Jesus teaches us to help those who need our help even if we should lose by it.

After various comments on the moral of the story, to the effect that "loan oft loses both itself and friend," Sonia tells a story of two friends and a wag.

There were two friends who had been friends from childhood, and who were more than brothers to each other; and these two friends had never been known to quarrel. Now there was a wag in a neighbouring town, who one day, when he heard the people talking about these two friends who had never quarrelled, declared that he would make them quarrel. That day he put on a coat of which one side was blue and the other side red and then walked down the road that ran between the two men's houses. In the evening the friends met as usual and one of them said: "Did you see the wag pass to-day with a red coat on?"

"Yes," said the other, "I saw him pass; but it wasn't a red coat. It was blue."

"I am sure it was red," said the first.

"But it wasn't. It was blue," said the other.

And so they disputed until one of them called the other a fool; and then they fought.

"Take that," said one.

"And that," said the other.

So they fought until their wives came running to them and parted them. But they went to their houses with heavy hearts. For they had been friends for a lifetime and now their friendship was broken. And all the people felt sorrow. But the wag, when he came along, laughed and told them how he had worn a coat which was red on one side and blue on the other. And the friends and their wives ever afterwards hated the wag.

Sonia's stories were most interesting when he recounted

real incidents in his own life. When a young man, he told us, he had lived as a trader at this Fang town opposite which we were anchored. The noise of drumming, dancing and singing had ceased and the town was wrapped in untroubled sleep. There is no stillness in the world like that of an African town in the night.

Sonia told us about a battle he had witnessed, which was fought upon the river, at this very place where we lay ; a battle between this town and a town which then stood on the opposite bank, but of which nothing now remained. This town was already old at the time of the war but the other was new, the people having come recently from the far interior, being driven forth by the hostility of more powerful clans behind. There was no quarrel between the towns ; but the people of the old town thought that it would be good policy to give their new neighbours a whipping upon their arrival in order to insure a wholesome respect.

First, I believe, they stole a woman. Then followed a guerrilla warfare, in which each side killed as they had opportunity, waylaying individuals, or rushing from ambush upon a party of venturesome stragglers from the enemy's town. In this way a number were killed on each side ; and the war, which was first undertaken more as a vain exploit or adventure than from any serious motive, was soon prosecuted with feelings of deadly hate and a purpose of revenge. Every night, from each town, the wail of mourning for the dead was wafted across the river ; and curses were mingled with the mourning.

At length one canoe attacked another in the river, where they had been fishing. Immediately other canoes came to their help, and still others, ever so many of them, pushing off rapidly from each side until all the men of the two towns, young and old, were in the middle of the river where they fought to a finish. When fighting in

canoes, whatever other weapons they may have, they carry a small battle-ax, which is used especially to prevent the capsizing of the canoe by those who are already in the water. Sonia told how that, again and again, at a blow they severed a man's hand, or completely disabled him. They swim so well that they could still make a strong fight after being capsized. The battle was long, and the river ran red with their blood. Those who were killed were carried by the current out to the sea to feed the sharks.

The people of the new town lost. Those of them who were left pulled down their town and moved to another place. In a few years nothing remained of it but one or two skeletons with the grass growing through their ribs. But for years afterwards the superstitious native passing along the river in the dead of night heard again the noise of battle—fierce cries and dying groans. And whenever this sound is heard, they say, again the river runs red like blood.

One incident of the war, prior to the final battle, I recall, as Sonia told it that night.

The people of the old town captured a man of the other side, and his son, a little boy. They bound the father, and before his eyes deliberately killed his son—and ate his flesh. The main motive of cannibalism, under such circumstances, would be neither wanton cruelty nor a vicious appetite, but *fetishism*. By eating one of their number they render the enemy powerless to do them any further injury. Some time afterwards they slew the father. But already they had broken his heart, and with hands uplifted he welcomed the death-blow.

The emotion with which old Sonia told this whole story indicated how his own heart had been wrung. He said not a word about any effort of his to dissuade the people from their cruelty; but I knew him well, and I

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was confident that the part he had taken was not unheroic. That is a story that was never told.

Sonia in his latter years, between long intervals of sickness, was a missionary to the Fang. They all regarded him with love and reverence. The oldest savage among them, and the wildest, were as children when they addressed him.

In the little graveyard, on the mission hill at Baraka, are the graves of those who have thought that life itself was not too great a price to pay for the saving of such men and women from degradation. Henry Drummond said that while in Africa he had been in an atmosphere of death all the time, and that he realized, as never before, the awful fact of death and its desolation as something calling for an answer. One of my first experiences in Gaboon reminded me that I was again in the land of death, when I assisted in the burial service of the beautiful young wife and bride of a fellow missionary, less than three months after their arrival in Africa. So far away from home we enter deeply into each other's sorrows. I was standing by in the last hour, when with pale face the stricken but silent husband stepped to the open door and nervously plucked a flower growing there, a large crimson hibiscus, the beauty of the tropics, which he laid on the pillow beside his unconscious wife, and the two broken flowers drooped and died together, while the shadows darkened around us and the night came on. In the unconscious act there was something more affecting than in any words of grief. It seemed to relate this death to all death everywhere, in a world where forms of life appear only to vanish into darkness and day hurries to the night.

Soon after our patient sufferer had ceased to breathe, in the midst of the stillness that followed the prolonged struggle with the fever, a storm that had been gathering with the darkness broke forth with great violence that

shook the house. I had only arrived in Africa. I went out into the storm unspeakably oppressed with doubt, to which it was a kind of relief. Was it a noble sacrifice? or an appalling waste? In the intervals of the storm, and mingling with it, there came the sound of a dirge, the hopeless death-wail, from a village close by, where the poor natives were mourning for one of their number who had died that day, a young man at whose bed I had stood a few hours earlier, the only son of a heart-broken mother. Those who have always known the words of One who brought life and immortality to light cannot realize the heathen view of death, and the abysmal darkness of the invisible world. There is no sound so well known in Africa, and none that so haunts the memory in after years, as the mourning dirge, in which with united voices they chant their sorrow for the dead—their despair and desolation; the sound that is borne upon every night-wind and becomes to the imagination the very voice of Africa. The groaning of the palm-trees in the darkness of that night, as they bent beneath the tempest, and in the distance the sound of the troubled sea, were the fitting accompaniment and interlude. But in our house, beside our dead, there was light—and doubt was vanquished. There, hope was whispering to a stricken heart sweet promises of life; and faith was saying: "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

## V

### AFRICAN MUSIC

**I**T was many years ago, among the Bulu, in Kamerun. Dr. Good and myself were holding a religious service in the town of a great chief, Abesula, whose thirty-five wives were seated around him. After we had sung several hymns Dr. Good began to preach, but had not proceeded as far as *secondly* when Abesula, interrupting, exclaimed: "Say, white man, won't you stop talking and sing again? And I wish you would dance with your singing; for I don't care for singing without dancing; and I don't like preaching at all."

We found that Abesula's whole family were united in this preference for comic opera. But Dr. Good and I were in hopeless disagreement as to which of us should do the dancing. Besides, the Africans themselves are expert dancers and qualified judges; and if our music had "charms to soothe the savage breast," I am afraid that our dancing would have made more savages than it would have soothed.

After a few months among the Bulu I had an organ brought up from the coast, a baby-organ, which when folded a man could carry on his head. The people had heard that something wonderful was coming with the next caravan; and on the day of its arrival it seemed as if the whole Bulu tribe had assembled on our hill. Having unpacked the organ I set it on the porch while they all stood on the ground below. The tension of suspense during the slow progress of preparation was a test of endurance. At

last, everything being ready, I sat down at the organ, filled the bellows, and amidst profound silence suddenly sounded a loud chord. Instantly the crowd bolted. Nothing was to be seen but disappearing legs. The men, being more fleet of limb, reached the hiding-places first; then the women and larger children, the smaller children being left to their fate. To them the organ was of course a fetish, and full of talking spirits. Gradually they came out from their hiding-places. Then, as fear subsided, each one began to laugh at the others and to tell his ancestors all about it. In the ensuing noise the organ had a rest. They soon became devotedly fond of it, and it was a great help in our mission work. Regularly on Sunday morning after the service I would set the organ on the porch and play for them until I was tired—and that was not very long; for in that climate the bellows were soon in such condition that the playing was prominently spectacular, done with the feet, reinforced by all the muscles of the body. In after years, among the Fang of the French Congo, I always carried an organ with me.

To all the interior natives, Bulu and Fang, and even to the coast tribe of Batanga, my playing of that little organ was much the most wonderful thing about me. In going to Africa a second time, after four years' absence, on my way to Gaboon I landed at Batanga for a few hours. The natives remembered me as having a beard, and I was now shaved. But there was with me a fellow traveller who had just such a beard as mine had been; so that, to the natives, he looked more like me than I did myself. They of course mistook him for me; and the stranger got a friendly reception which pleased him as much as it surprised him. He said he never had met such friendly natives. But upon my protest they discovered their mistake and began to pay me some atten-

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tion. I insisted that they had forgotten me and that my feelings were hurt ; at which they made the most excited remonstrance. They remembered that I had played the organ. One of the boys, in his eagerness to convince me that they had not forgotten me, began to imitate my motions at the organ, which he exaggerated to an outlandish caricature in which hands, feet, head, mouth and eyes were equally active, saying as he performed : "Look me, Mr. Milligan ; this be you." Following his example, they all engaged in a performance that would have scandalized any company of self-respecting monkeys, saying the while : "This be you, Mr. Milligan ; this be you."

My fellow traveller, who may have felt somewhat chagrined at finding that the hearty reception accorded him was intended for me, turned to me and made some remarks that have no rightful place here.

We are all familiar with the legend that Pythagoras invented the first musical instrument after listening to the blacksmith's hammers. Longfellow repeats it in the poem, "To a Child" :

" As great Pythagoras of yore,  
Standing beside the blacksmith's door,  
And hearing the hammers, as they smote  
The anvils with a different note,  
Stole from the varying tones that hung  
Vibrant on every iron tongue  
The secret of the sounding wire,  
And formed the seven-corded lyre."

Shakespeare also refers to this reputed origin of music in "The Two Noble Kinsmen." Pirithous, relating the death of Arcite, tells how he rode the pavement on a horse so black that the superstitious would have feared to buy him, a prancing steed whose iron-shod feet seemed

only to touch the stones—as if counting them, rather than trampling them, and —

“ thus went counting  
The flinty pavement, dancing as 'twere to the music  
His own boots made—for, as they say, from iron  
Came music's origin.”

Nevertheless, this story—like many others that cluster about the name of Pythagoras, as, for instance, that he was seen in two cities at the same time—is seriously vulnerable, and is probably pure myth, without enough of fact to qualify as a legend. The obvious objection, that various hammers striking upon an anvil give out, not different notes, but the same—for the notes vary with the anvil and not with the hammers—Longfellow meets by using the plural, *anvils*.

In the latest of Mr. H. E. Krehbiel's learned and interesting books, *The Pianoforte and Its Music*, the writer holds that the first of all stringed instruments was the bow. Every boy knows the musical twang of the bow-string at the moment that the arrow flies. In the *Iliad*, Apollo, the god of music, is also the god of archery, and is called the “bearer of the silver bow.” Mr. Krehbiel also recalls the passage in the *Odyssey* in which Ulysses tries his bow, after the suitors of Penelope, one by one, had tried and failed ; and when Ulysses drew the arrow to its head and let it go, the string rang shrill and sweet as the note of a swallow. This theory of the origin of musical instruments is strikingly supported by the instruments in present use among the savage and primitive tribes of West Africa.

A Kombe cook, at Gaboon, each day after dinner, lay down for a nap and played himself to sleep upon an instrument which was nothing but a bow with a single string. The string was made of a certain runner, the

fibre of which is very tough and gives a resonant note. The cook found that by plucking the string with a metal, rather than with his fingers, he produced a better note ; so for this purpose he regularly used the bread-knife and took it to bed with him. When I first heard this unclassical music I thought he was playing on a Jew's-harp.

The native improves this instrument when he attaches to one end of it a gourd or calabash, in the shape of a bowl, to augment the sound—the first sound-box. When he plays he places the flat side of the gourd against his chest. He improves the instrument immensely when he adds three strings, making four in all, successively shorter. The four strings pass over a central bridge, which is notched at different heights for the different strings. This makes eight strings and produces eight different notes. The gourd, or sound-box, is placed in the middle of the bow, opposite the bridge. This instrument is usually made from the midrib of a palm-leaf. The bent midrib itself forms the bow ; while the strings are the loosened fibres of its own tough skin. These are made taut by the vertical bridge, and their vibrating length is regulated by strong bands passing around the ends of the strings and the bow.

Another native instrument is a harp, both in shape and in principle. The upper end is a bow, or half-bow ; the lower end is an oblong sound-box covered with a perforated skin—monkey-skin or goatskin. The upper ends of the strings are attached to pegs inserted in the bow, by which the strings may be tuned. There is also a five-stringed lyre, with a sound-box somewhat like the harp, but instead of a single bow at the end, there are five bent fingers, each with its string. There is a very rudimentary dulcimer, and a xylophone, and various modifications of the instruments which I have described.

The favourite of all these instruments, and the one of

largest musical capacity, is the harp. The native uses it most frequently to accompany his singing. There are professional singers among them, whose position is somewhat analogous to that of minstrels several centuries ago in Europe. The songs of these professional singers are usually lengthy ballads—traditional tales in lyric form. The monotony of the solo, which is a dramatic recitative, is broken by a somewhat regular and frequent choral response. The singer half closes his eyes and sways his body as he sings. He seems oblivious of time and place. I have sometimes thought that there was an element of hypnotism in his influence upon his audience. Upon the instrument he plays a running and unvaried accompaniment to his song. But it would be a great mistake to judge the song, or the African capacity for melody, by the miserably inadequate instrument. The singer's voice far exceeds the instrument, both in range and in the division of intervals.

The fact is, however, that the only one of his musical instruments which the African regards with profound respect is his dearly-beloved *tom-tom*—the drum to which he dances. From this some have inferred that, to the African savage, rhythm without melody is music, which of course is a mistake. It is even doubtful whether his sense of melody be not altogether as keen as his sense of rhythm, though not equally appealed to. The drum is very easy to construct; but not so the harp or viol; and the Negro is so lacking in mechanical genius that he cannot invent an instrument capable of reproducing his melodies. Therefore the melodies are always vocal. They do not dance to the drum, by itself; for they invariably sing when they dance. Dancing without singing is almost impossible; at least I have never seen it during seven years in Africa. They are passionately fond of singing and have good voices. The voices of the

men are much better than those of the women and have sometimes the resonant sonority of a deep organ-tone, or an exquisite melancholy, which it is to be hoped they may never lose through future conditions of civilization.

The native songs are elementary but fascinating. Few white men, however, can sing them; for the scales, or tone-systems, upon which most of them are based, are entirely different from our major and minor modes. Their scales have not a distinct tonic, that is, a basal tone from which the others in the system are derived, as, for instance, the first tone, *do*, of our major scale. It follows that the cadences of their music are not clearly defined; or, as a friend of mine would say, "They don't taper off to an end like ours."

Although their music is so difficult for the white man, the natives learn our music with astonishing ease, even their oldest men and women, and sing it well—if they have half a chance. But is it surprising that—since our scales are new to them—they at first need a little careful training, or at least the lead of a clear-toned organ reasonably well played? Otherwise they are not unlikely to substitute the tones of their own scales. The result is indescribable. Imagine a large congregation singing the doxology with all their might, and about half of them singing it in G minor instead of G major! But the comparison is inadequate. The singing in some mission congregations is enough to cause a panic. The first Sunday that I spent in Africa was at Batanga, where the people had learned the hymns before any white missionaries went to live among them. I was near the church when the large congregation started the first hymn. It was a translation of "God is the Refuge of His saints, When storms of sharp distress invade." The tune of this *storm of sharp distress* was good old *Ward*, but, alas, in such a state of *decomposition* that I did not recognize it until they had

sung it through twice. And so it was with many of the tunes. Their own music has no extended range of high and low notes ; and so, in these hymns, whenever they came to a high passage, or even a single high note, they sang it an octave lower, and the low notes they sang an octave higher. It was a vocal feat, and no audience of white people could have done it without training ; but it did not sound much like music, still less like worship.

So great a musician as Dvorak, when he came to America, was profoundly moved by the original melodies of the American Negro, and became their enthusiastic champion. Indeed, they inspired the most beautiful of all his symphonies, the one entitled, "Aus der Neuen Welt." I do not refer, of course, to the so-called Negro melodies composed by white men. Some of these are beautiful ; but they are not Negro melodies. They do not express the Negro's emotional life and he does not care much for them. Those wonderful songs of the Fisk Jubilee Singers are the real thing. Some of those very melodies may have originated in Africa. Others are more developed than any that I heard in Africa ; but they are very similar, and they use the same strange scales, which makes them unfamiliar to our ears and difficult to acquire. Among them, I really believe, are occasional motives as capable of development as those of Hungary.

For a long time the music of Africa defied every attempt on my part to reduce it to musical notation. Very few persons have made the attempt ; for it is easier to reduce their language to writing than their music. At first it seemed as inarticulate and spontaneous as the sound of the distant surf with which it blended, or the music of the night-wind in the bamboo.

The melody of African music is strange to our ears, because, as I have said, it is usually derived from tone-systems that are unlike either our major or minor scales.

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They have the *pentatonic* scale, that is, a major scale without the fourth and the seventh notes, thus avoiding the use of semitones ; but their other scales are strange to most people. Among them are some of the scales of the *plain-song* of the Roman Catholic Church—the *Gregorian chant*. The plain-song is the only survival (among ourselves) of ancient music. Modern music is based upon harmony, and consists essentially in a progression of chords. The successive tones of a modern melody acquire their character not chiefly from their own sequence, as do ancient melodies, but from the chords to which they belong ; and the chords even when they are not voiced are always understood. But harmony itself is modern, dating from about the thirteenth century. African melodies cannot always be harmonized, and when the harmony is added it is not usually effective.

But in African music another scale is employed which is not Gregorian, but oriental. It is a minor scale with an augmented interval—a tone and a half—between the sixth and seventh notes, that is, with a minor sixth and a major seventh. This peculiarly effective interval imparts an intense melancholy. Verdi, with delightful propriety, makes use of this very scale in *Aïda*, in the hymn of the Egyptian priestesses in the first act, where an extant Arab melody is introduced. This scale is probably the oldest tone-system in the world and may have come originally from the banks of the Ganges, in the far-distant past.

The African, like the oriental, conceives of the scales, and the melodies derived from them, as moving downward, instead of upward like our own. All African music sings downward. Another striking peculiarity is that they lack *tonality*, as the musician would say ; that is, they seem not to be in any particular key. The strong feeling of the key-note which characterizes our major

scale is entirely absent ; and this, of course, accounts for the absence of a well-defined cadence, to which I have alluded. The weird fascination of the African dirge is largely due to this absence of tonality. Musical genius could hardly surpass this instinctive expression of despair—the desolation of an everlasting farewell.

The emotion which it represents, however intense, is rather disappointingly transient. Sometimes it is even unreal ; I mean to say that it is sometimes indulged for its own sake. And this is true of the Negro everywhere. A few days ago I came upon an article in an old magazine, in which a Southern woman, in "Rambling Talks About the Negro," tells of a mourning party of Negroes that assembled one night beside her house to finish a mourning ceremony that ought to have been a part of a funeral a few days earlier ; but a storm had interrupted it. The unearthly mournfulness of their music was intensified by their beautiful voices until it became unbearable, and the woman bowed her head upon the window sill and cried without restraint, while imagination conjured up fictitious woes, such as the sudden death of her children and of all her friends, until she was alone in a bleak world. Then it occurred to her that it was wrong for people to indulge a voluntary anguish and make a luxury of misery ; so she sent a servant to offer a barrel of water-melons to the party of mourners on condition that, instead of mourning, they should dance and jollify ; to which they heartily responded, after first making sure that the melons were in good condition, for they really preferred to mourn.

When, to the peculiar scales which Africans employ, one adds the further fact that in African music (and indeed in the Negro melodies of our South) the note which corresponds to our seventh in the scale (a step below the tonic) is seldom a true seventh, but is slightly flatted,

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enough to make a distinct note with a character of its own, one has probably accounted for the peculiar plain-tiveness, the elusiveness, the vague mysteriousness, which constitutes the charm of all true Negro music.

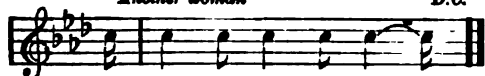
The rhythm of African music is a further impediment to our appreciation. In the music of the dance the rhythm is of necessity somewhat regular. But even in this music it is variable and does not conform throughout to any one time-scheme but changes back and forth from duple to triple within the same melody. This also is characteristic of oriental music. In most African music the rhythm is regulated by the words, like the recitative, the rhythmic imitation of declamatory speech. But it has the symmetry that feeling secures. The best way to learn the African's song is to watch the swaying of his body and imitate it, and if the words have meaning let their feeling possess one. Mr. William E. Barton, the compiler of a small collection of choice Negro melodies, tells how that "Aunt Dinah," who had been trying to teach a Negro hymn to a young lady, at last seeing her begin to sway her body slightly and pat her foot upon the floor, exclaimed: "Dat's right, honey! Dat's de berry way! Now you's a-gittin' it sho nuff! You'll nebber larn 'em in de wuld till you sings 'em in de sperrit."

The African sings not only his joy, but his grief; not only his love, but his anger, his revenge and his despair. Livingstone was greatly surprised, upon approaching a slave caravan, to hear some of them singing. But as he listened he found that they were singing words of grief and vengeance—for usually they were betrayed and sold by some of their own people. So it was everywhere, as old men of Gaboon have told me; they went away chanting their desolation and their curses upon those who had betrayed them.

There is no doubt that music is the art-form of the Negro. He is the most musical person living. His entire emotional life he utters in song. He has not yet done any great thing. His day is still future. But I believe that when he comes, he will come singing.

*Chorus of men and women**Leading woman**Another woman*

D.C.



## DANCE SONG OF MPONGWE

The time signature is only approximately correct, and forces a rhythmic symmetry which African music does not possess. The energetic momentum is characteristic of African dance music.



## CANOE SONG OF GABOON

All African music, like Oriental music, sings downward.

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## A MOURNING DIRGE

**This is chanted by an individual, or a succession of individuals, and is not the usual wail in which all join, though it is much like it. African music is not always based upon harmony; nor does harmony always improve it.**

## VI

### PESTS

**I**T is part of the squalid commonplace of life in Africa that the most exciting adventures are not with elephants but with ants, and our worst danger is not the leopard but the mosquito. And this struggle against minute enemies requires more patience than the fight with beasts, both because it is not occasional, but an unrelenting warfare, and because it does not appeal to our love of the heroic, nor stimulate with the promise of praise. When Paul tells us that he fought with beasts at Ephesus, our hearts swell with admiration; but if he had said: "I have fought with the mosquitoes in Africa," he would have elicited no sympathy and some ridicule; although the latter is also a fight for life, and attended by greater danger and weariness and pain.

It is significant that it was in Africa that Moses summoned the ten plagues to his aid in humbling the haughty Pharaoh. If ten had not been sufficient he might have summoned ten times ten, and without exhausting the domestic resources.

We are grateful that common houseflies are not sufficiently numerous to constitute a pest, except where cattle are bred in large numbers. In Gaboon there was no need for screens on doors and windows.

But there are many kinds of flies, and the natives who have not learned to wear clothing commonly carry a fly-brush made of a bunch of stiff grass about two feet long, that they may defend the whole area of the back, where the fly usually makes its attack. When one sees a fly on

a neighbour's back it is regarded as a duty of friendship to come up behind that neighbour slowly and stealthily, giving the fly full time to bite his worst and so be deserving of death, then to strike an awful blow on the neighbour's back, fit to bring him to his feet with a yell. It seldom harms the fly, but it expresses great indignation, and, by implication, sympathy with your neighbour. The habit of killing flies, or attempting to kill them when they alight, is an obsession with the native, and it seems a physical impossibility for him to resist. He does it in church. When I first preached in Batanga, to a large congregation, I was very much disturbed by this unlooked-for and constant slapping on bare backs. And whenever I saw a man creep quietly across the aisle or forward several seats to perform this friendly office, I could not help watching until I heard the slap, when I always felt like stopping the discourse long enough to ask: "Did you kill it?" For in the mind of all those around there seemed to be nothing else going on in that church but this exhibition of applied Christianity.

Forgetting that the white man is protected by his clothing, they vie with each other in the discharge of this courtesy; and the exasperating blows that the white man receives from his black friends are the chief discomfort that he suffers from the larger flies. One day shortly before leaving Africa I was riding in an open boat when a native man sitting behind me suddenly gave me a slap on the back that actually hurt, and so startled me that I did some fool thing a little short of leaping into the sea. I turned around and asked the man in a tone of cold politeness whether he was trying to make my back the same colour as his.

"Why, no," said he, "I am killing flies."

"I'm no fly," I replied frigidly.

A few minutes later, when I was indulging in a

somnolent reverie, he struck me again—I think it must have been in the same place, it hurt so much worse than the first time; whereupon I turned about and, striking a very dangerous attitude (for a missionary), I threatened that if he did it again I would land him a blow in the stomach whether there was a fly there or not. My boat-boys, who knew the uses of clothing and appreciated the immunity of my back from fly-bites as well as the greater tenderness and sensitiveness of the white man's body, laughed at this interesting diversion. Then they undertook to enlighten their friend from the bush as to the white man's view-point, combining theoretical instruction with practical sense by removing him to another seat: for they well knew that if he should see another fly on my back, even while they were talking, he would strike again. He cannot help it: the habit is coercive.

Among the worst pests, and peculiar to Africa, is the driver ant. They go together in countless and incomprehensible numbers. The first sight that one gets of them is a glistening-black, rapid-running stream about two inches wide crossing the path before him. Upon closer inspection he finds that the stream is composed of ants; and recognizing the driver ant of which he has heard many incredible stories on the way to Africa, he feels like shouting "Fire!" and running for his life. But as a matter of fact he may with impunity examine them as closely as he pleases so long as he does not touch them. They are so occupied with their own serious purpose that they will take no notice of him.

In the middle of the black stream are the females, about the size of our common, black wood-ant, while along the sides run the soldiers guarding from attack, and these are about four times the size of the others. The defense of the females is no matter of necessity, but

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rather gallantry, for those female viragoes are abundantly able to defend themselves. No creature so small ever had such a bite. They are all provided with jaws and with stings and they know how to work both vigorously. Some fine day as the newcomer saunters along, his eyes engaged with the beauty of the landscape, he walks into the ants. It may be one minute, perhaps two, and possibly five, before he knows anything of the serious mistake he has made. Then suddenly he experiences a sensation which is usually compared to numerous red-hot pincers applied implacably ; for these ants do not let go. If he follows the course prescribed by ardent advisers, he will do either of two things : he will instantly strip off his clothing, even if he should be in the governor's courtyard, yelling the while at the top of his voice so that those who object may go some other way ; or he will make a dash for the nearest rain-barrel and tumble into it. Fortunately, their bite is not poisonous and leaves no bad effects afterwards. After this experience he will never allow more than one eye to dwell upon the charm of the landscape ; the other will be directed to the path before him. If a man must go out at night he always carries a lantern.

When these ants come to a place where there is food to their liking, they scatter and spread out over a large area. Then, of course, they are not so quickly discovered, and one may easily walk into them. They are one of the trials of bush-travel, and the worst living nuisance of the bush, where the undergrowth hides them even from the keen eye of the native. There is seldom a day on a bush journey that the caravan does not march into the drivers. Then there is some wild yelling by those in the lead ; the cry, " Drivers ! " goes all along the line and each man as he comes to them makes a lively dash through them, stamping heavily as he runs ; for it is

possible thus to keep them off or to shake them off before they get a hold. All other insects and animals flee before them, including the python and the leopard.

Travellers have frequently told how that the silent, sleeping forest has suddenly become all astir and vocal, the angry boom of the gorilla or the frightened bleat of the gazelle alternating with a cry of the leopard and the scream of the elephant; all forgetful of their mutual hostility and vying with one another in the speed of their escape from the driver ant, abroad on a foraging expedition, to the number of infinity.

They make frequent visits to the native villages and the white man's premises, usually in the night, spreading over the whole place,—the ground, the houses, inside and out, and through the roofs. Here they act as scavengers, driving before them all other insect nuisances, such as the cockroaches and centipedes, which especially infest the thatched roofs. Nevertheless, if one should hear the language of the average white man, upon the occasion of one of these nocturnal visitations, when the drivers have wakened him rudely and driven him headlong out into the dark, and perhaps the rain, there to shiver during this untimely house-cleaning, one would not for a moment mistake it for an expression of gratitude.

Setting hens must be kept carefully out of their way. In one instance I knew of the drivers visiting a nest one night when the young chickens were just coming out of the shells. The empty shells were there in the morning, but no chickens. If they should gain undiscovered access to a chicken-house in the night, they would leave nothing but bones and feathers. At Efulen we built our chicken-house against the workmen's house, on the side away from the bush, so that the drivers on their approach should first visit the workmen and we should be warned in time to save our chickens.

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We had been there only a short time when we were awakened one night by the familiar outcry as the men were driven out of their house. But the drivers had come from a different direction that night, and when we went to the chicken-house we found it already in their possession. It was but the work of a minute or two to tuck our pajamas inside our socks, bind our sleeves with handkerchiefs around the wrists, tie another handkerchief around the neck and pull a cap down over the head. Thus prepared I entered the chicken-house, the ground and walls of which were a glistening black mass. Stamping my feet all the time, I snatched the chickens one by one from the roost, stripped the handful of loose ants from their legs and handed them out to Dr. Good and Mr. Kerr, who picked off the remaining ants, after which we brought the chickens into our house and put them on the pantry shelves until morning, meanwhile building a line of fire around the house to keep the drivers back.

But it was not long after this that they found the house unguarded one morning just at daylight when I was alone at Efulen. I was awake but not yet ready to rise when I heard a low, rustling sound upon the floor of my room. After a few minutes, observing that it was becoming more distinct, I drew back my mosquito-net and looked out. Almost the entire floor was black with the drivers, and they were close to the bed. From the foot of the bed towards the door it was still possible for me to escape by a good jump; and in a moment I found myself shivering out in the yard while my clothes were still in the house.

One day, as Dr. Good and I were entering a native village, Dr. Good walked through some stray drivers. He began to preach to the people, who as it happened were already gathered in the street where they had been taking a palaver. Before he had been preaching more than a

minute I observed that his gestures were more animated than I had ever seen before. Soon they became violent, noticeably irrelevant and even of questionable propriety. It was a little like Brer Rabbit, one evening when the mosquitoes were bad, telling the wolf about his grandfather's spots. I looked on with increasing amazement and consternation, until at last even Dr. Good's indomitable will was overborne, and he shouted : " Drivers ! " and bolted abruptly for the bush. I tried to go on with the service, but it was almost impossible because of the laughter of the audience. Each one insisted upon telling his neighbours all about it, to the accompaniment of a broad caricature of Dr. Good's gestures.

There was once a native man in Gaboon who was slightly deranged in his mind. The government advised, and at last insisted, that he should not be allowed at large. His family, being averse to confining him, chiefly, I imagine, because of the care it would entail upon them, sent him to a village of their relations across the river ten miles distant. There he remained for some time. The people there bound him at night lest he might set fire to the town while they slept. He objected to this and at last became troublesome by calling out continually during the night. Then they improvised a rude shelter back a short distance from the town, where they placed him at night and as usual bound him. One night he was more noisy than ever before, yelling and screaming hideously so that he wakened the people. They thought that he had become demented but no one went to him until morning, and then they made the horrible discovery that the drivers had attacked and devoured him.

In some tribes criminals are sometimes punished by being bound to the ground in the track of the drivers. One can hardly conceive of anything more horrible ; for they would enter ears and eyes and nostrils. But I be-

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lieve this is very rarely done. When death is decided upon, the Africans usually accomplish it by quick means.

There is another ant which I would say is worse than the driver, were it not that as yet its distribution is limited and it may be only transient. It is a very small red ant difficult to see with the naked eye except in a good light and on a white surface. It takes to dark closets, upholstered furniture, hair mattresses and those who would sleep upon them. It has not been long known in those portions of West Africa that are familiar to the white man. It has come from the southeast towards the coast. In 1900 it took possession of our mission-house at Angom, which was not occupied at that time.

It is doubtful whether this ant would be likely to infest a house when the grass around it is kept closely cut and the house well opened to the light and air; but when once infested it is not clear that these precautions would drive it out. One of Woermann's trading-houses on the Ogowè had to be abandoned because of it.

My first experience with it was in 1900 when I visited Angom and slept in the mission-house that had been occupied only occasionally for more than a year. I was no sooner asleep than I was awakened by an extremely painful sensation, as if red-hot pepper had been sprinkled all over me. I felt no sharp bite, but only this intolerable smarting pain. It occurred to me that I might have been poisoned during the day by some violently poisonous herb in the bush or the overgrown garden; but I remained in bed never thinking that the cause of it was there. The natives told me in the morning what it was. My flesh was badly inflamed and I had fever all that day. After that I always slept in the boat, or in later years, the launch, when I visited Angom.

Among African pests there is another red ant, very small, though not so small as the last. It does not bite

nor attack the person, but is nevertheless a great nuisance, particularly to housekeepers. All table food must be kept out of its way. Any food remaining on the table even an hour is covered with them. They are especially fond of sugar; and if it is left on the table or unprotected from one meal to the next, it is found a living red mass. By what powerful instinct they immediately discover the place where food is, and where they come from in such numbers, are among the mysteries that the white man will often ponder. Most of our food is imported, in tins, and once a tin is opened it is kept away from these ants by being placed in a safe suspended from the ceiling by tarred rope. The safe is a light frame of wood covered with wire screen or netting.

Besides these, there are numerous other varieties of ants, less harmful, or altogether harmless. The ground is so infested with them that neither white man nor native ever thinks of sitting down upon it, as we might sit upon the grass in this country. Altogether, more than five thousand varieties of ants have been described and classified; and most of these are found in Africa.

Among the worst of the African pests is the *jigger*. Those who are most sensitive to it would without doubt call it the worst of all. If the pest of the small ant travels from the interior towards the coast, this pest began at the coast and is extending towards the interior. It has evidently been imported—tradition says from Brazil, in the cargo and sand ballast of sailing vessels. The older inhabitants along the coast remember when it first became known, and I am sure that it made itself known very soon after it arrived. The jigger is a tiny species of flea, so small that the naked eye sees it with difficulty. It has all the reprehensible habits of its kind. The males hop all over one's person in a playful manner, giving him a nip here and a nip there; but the females burrow be-

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neath the skin. The favourite place is the feet, especially under the nails, but they are frequently found also under the finger nails and sometimes in the elbows and knees. Here the female, unless discovered and removed, forms a sac which expands to the size of a small pea, and which contains hundreds of little jiggers who soon begin to "jig" for themselves, and burrow again in the same flesh. Many of them however are scattered on the ground ; those that remain keep multiplying, until if neglected the whole foot becomes a festering sore.

To the African child the jigger is the occasion of its worst suffering. I have seen children who could not walk, some with toes eaten away, and several with nearly the whole foot gone. For, to the African and to some white men, they are not irritating while boring beneath the skin, and afterwards they are very hard to see, especially in the black skin of the native. One may know nothing of their presence for several days, after which they are so hard to remove that the native child will bear the irritating itch that they first occasion rather than submit to the pain of removing them ; and when the itch has become a painful sore, no child could remove them. Some African mothers watch their children's feet closely but others neglect them cruelly. I am glad to say that those who allow their feet to get full of jiggers, or mothers who neglect the care of their children's feet, are looked down upon, as lousy persons would be among us, though not to the same extent.

The jiggers are less troublesome in the wet season. But with the dry season their numbers increase rapidly, and towards the close of the season the soil and the sand are fairly alive with them. If possible, missionary boarding-schools ought to have vacation at this time ; for the white missionary is sure to get them in the schoolroom ; and the dormitories, which usually have only earthen

floors, become so infested with them that even native children are often kept awake at night, and the amount of discipline necessary to make them keep their feet in order may demoralize the school. There are always children, large and small, who need no supervision, and are sufficiently self-respecting to keep their feet clean ; but their task is made exceedingly difficult by the presence in the same dormitory of those who breed jiggers by thousands. As a rule, with but few exceptions, the children who keep their feet clean are those who have been in the school before and are known as mission-boys and mission-girls.

In my boys' boarding-school of later years one would see a strange sight each day during the dry season. The whole school filed out at recess and sat down along either side of the path leading to the mission-house. A committee of boys examined the feet of the others and reported to me the name of every boy who had jiggers in his feet ; while I stood with note-book in hand and wrote down their names. Then when the food was given out at noon these boys were left without food until their feet were pronounced clean. The larger boys were responsible for those of their own town or family who were too small to attend to their own feet. I once kept a boy more than a day without food until he removed his jiggers, and one hopeless boy I at last expelled from the school for the offense. For rigid insistence upon this discipline, I felt, lay close to moral instruction.

The white man of course suffers from jiggers, but not so much as the native, because of his shoes, his cleaner house, and because his feet are more sensitive, so that he becomes aware of them after several days at the most, when they can be removed without injury, if it is very carefully done. After one has been in Africa a length of time he will detect their presence as soon as they begin to

burrow. Some white men have a native boy examine their feet every night or morning ; for the boy has very sharp eyes, and he removes the jigger with surprising skill. It can be done with a pin ; a needle is better and a pair of tweezers is still better. If the sac that is formed after several days be broken in the removal, it may cause a sore that will take some time to heal. Indeed, if one be greatly reduced in health and the blood in bad condition, it may not heal at all until he leaves the country on furlough. I have known men who for weeks were not able to wear a shoe because of jigger sores.

After I had been a few months in Africa, one day, while in bed with fever, I said to a friend that in allowing my feet to touch the floor beside the bed where natives had been standing, I must have caught the itch ; for a most irritating itch had been troubling me for several days. My friend at once suggested jiggers as the cause. I answered with great assurance that it certainly was not jiggers, for I had watched my feet very closely, having determined from the first that I should get no jiggers—which of course was true, but I suppose I had been watching for creatures the size of potato-bugs crawling over my feet. I at once called a native boy, however, wishing perhaps to assure my friend, and the boy found seven colonies of jiggers. It took my feet a long time to heal. But it never happened again.

The male jigger, as I have said, does not burrow in the flesh, but disports himself upon the surface and makes himself very numerous. He is one of the great variety of influences that keep the white man constantly scratching. The native scratches too, scratches most of the time, and often with both hands, but he does not get excited about it, nor attract so much attention. But the habit is disgusting in the white man, and after all it is a habit rather than a necessity. A minority exercise the

strongest self-restraint, a larger number exercise restraint sometimes; many white men, however, exercise no restraint at all, but scratch continually, regardless of the occasion.

The sandfly, or *midge*, not known at the coast, but widely distributed in the interior, must be counted among the worst of African pests. They also are exceedingly small. They do their utmost to make life intolerable in the early morning hours after daylight, and again in the evening before dark. Some are more sensitive to them than others. When I was living in the interior, I bathed my hands and face in kerosene or turpentine each morning and evening as their hour approached and sometimes repeated it once or twice before they retired.

The mosquitoes are so bad, especially in the low places along the coast, that even the natives must sleep under mosquito nets.

In the song of our childhood we were impressed with the possibilities of such minutiae—as little drops of water, little grains of sand and little moments of time, when these are multiplied by infinity. But infinity is the status of all insect life in Africa. In order to realize the pest of the mosquito in towns adjacent to mangrove swamps one must multiply the insect until it seems to compose about fifty per cent. of the atmosphere. Its music too is impressive.

Wherever possible the white man builds his house upon a well-cleared hill and so escapes them, sometimes almost entirely as at Baraka. But this is not always possible. Many missionaries have told of writing letters while sitting cross-legged on their beds with the mosquito-net drawn down around the bed.

The centipede is common, especially in those houses that have thatch roofs. The African centipede is very large, and its bite is poisonous, though rarely fatal. My

first experience with it was one morning, in my bedroom, when I took a bouquet of flowers off the table and held them to my face. A large centipede glided out of the flowers, and running swiftly across my hand and along my arm to the elbow, dropped to the floor. Fortunately, my sleeve was short, else I should have been bitten. But one morning that I shall not forget I put on a sock, and there was a centipede in the toe of it. Unfortunately the sock was in a state of good repair; there was no hole in the toe. I was badly bitten, for it was some time before I could get the sock off; and the sickening feeling of repulsion was worse than the bite. I afterwards acquired the habit of shaking socks and shoes and clothing before putting them on. It is well worth while; for if one is disappointed in the matter of centipedes, one may perhaps shed a scorpion or several roaches, or sometimes even a snake. There are scorpions in all parts of Africa and in some places they abound. Their bite is always bad, and that of some varieties is dangerous.

But if I were asked my opinion as to the very worst pest in Africa, I would name the roach, or *cockroach*, and I think that the majority of white men would agree with me. My aversion to this creature is so strong that I do not pretend to be able to give a dispassionate judgment. It is a *beast* of an insect. It is much larger than the familiar cockroach of this country and is often two inches long; and all its powers and qualities of disposition are proportionately developed. It multiplies with amazing rapidity. It has an odour that for real nastiness takes preëminent rank even in malodorous Africa. It has a voracious appetite, eats almost everything and seems to get fat on arsenic, which I have fed to it in large quantities; though some persons declare that it thrives on arsenic by not eating it and by detecting it even when

mixed with sugar or anything else. It is found in the pantry, in clothing, in the library, in furniture, in every drawer and every corner, and a thatch roof is soon full of them. Even in bed one is not always free from them, for during sleep they often nibble one's nails and hair. The only way to kill the cockroach is to crush it, and the result is so disgusting that one will feel that it has more than avenged its death. Once in a while in the evening all the cockroaches take to flying, as if seized with a panic or madness. And when they do this they make one forget all the other pests of Africa.

If the least bit of butter or grease should touch a suit, one may depend upon it that unless it is put in a roach-proof trunk the roach will find that spot, and in the morning a hole will be eaten through. They devour wool as a horse eats hay; but they will leave both wool and grease for the starch contained in cloth bookbindings. They show a decided preference for new books, the starch being softer in these. If, in a moment of supreme folly, one should leave a book uncovered on a table over night, he will find it in the morning with several spots upon it the size of a dime, where the starch and colour are eaten out and the bare gray threads exposed. This happened to my *Memoirs of Tennyson*; both volumes were badly defaced in one night. Of course one will cover with heavy paper—when he *has* the paper—every book in his library, or, at least, those that are not already spoiled by the time he gets round to them; but books so covered lose their identity, like friends in masquerade. Besides, books thus kept in paper in that damp atmosphere will soon be covered with mould. If one adds to this that while roaches or mould are destroying the outside of his books white ants are doing their best to get at the inside, he will see that the obstacles incident to literary pursuits in Africa are well-nigh insuperable.

I cannot dismiss the white ant with this passing notice, for it also is one of the pests of Africa ; indeed, there are many who regard it as the worst of the African pests. It is characteristic of the impudent hypocrisy of this stealthy insect that it should somehow get itself called a *white ant*, when, as a matter of fact, it is not an ant at all, and is not white. It is a dirty-yellow *termite*, a soft-bodied insect, in appearance like a very small piece of impure tallow. It is commonest in Africa, but is also found in South America, India and Ceylon, and one species, it is said, is even found as far north as Bordeaux.

The admirable and interesting features of the white ant (and it has some) have nowhere been better described than in Henry Drummond's charming chapter in *Tropical Africa*.

The white ant lives underground in colonies of enormous numbers. It feeds chiefly on dead wood, and its presence is the explanation of the noticeable fact that there is very little dead wood—rotting logs or fallen branches—in an African forest. It does not wait until dead branches fall, but climbs the trees in search of them. But as its body is choice food for birds and other insects, and as it is defenseless and even blind, it protects itself whenever it comes above ground by building an earthen tunnel over itself as it climbs. This yellowish brown tunnel, a half tube in form, and half an inch wide, one will see running up trees and posts everywhere in Africa. In building it they carry the earth in grains or little pellets from below the ground through the tunnel to the open end of it; then having covered the pellet thoroughly with a sticky secretion they place it firmly in its proper position and hurry away for another. The soldiers of the colony, which are very few comparatively, are armed with formidable jaws. Two or three of these guard the open end of the tunnel where the work is being done. They

take no part in the work of construction. But if an enemy, usually in the form of an ant, draw near with the object of capturing a worker, the soldier in an instant will be upon him. He may pound him to death, or thrust him through, or using his mandibles like a pair of scissors may cut him in two, or hurl him from the battlement as with a catapult; these different methods representing different species. After this the workers again proceed with the building of the tunnel. These tunnels are for temporary use and are not nearly as substantial as the nests. They crumble into dust after a few weeks and are blown away by the wind or washed down by the rain.

The ant-hills and the ground below are filled with an intricate network of tunnels. Professor Drummond tells us that in the elevated plains of Central Africa these ant-hills are mounds ten or fifteen feet high and thirty or forty feet in diameter, and even then the greater part of the ant habitation is underground; and that the amount of reddish-brown earth plastered upon the trees is sufficient to give tone to the landscape. And this he says is the great agricultural process of the tropics, which in temperate zones is accomplished by the earthworm carrying the under soil to the surface, transposing the upper and the lower layers, doing thoroughly what man does rudely with the plough. In the lower plains of West Africa, the white ant is not so abundant, nor the ant-hills nearly so large as those which Professor Drummond saw. Nor is there any such need of them, for the earthworm is common enough. The more numerous ant-hills are two or three feet high and are often shaped like a series of bowls turned upside down one on top of another; but the shape varies. A good way to provide for young chickens is to send a boy to the bush to get an ant-hill, then break off several small pieces at a time and

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give to the chickens. It will be full of ants, and the happiness of the chickens will be ample reward: there is nothing that they like better.

And that reminds me that Schweinfurth, in *The Heart of Africa*, relates that he himself ate white ants in unlimited quantities. He says they are especially good with corn. And then he recommends them as best when they are "partly boiled and partly fried." I never tried them that way.

The most painstaking study and the most elaborate description of the white ant that has ever been made is probably that of Karl Escherich, whose book, *Termitenleben auf Ceylon*, has recently been published. Escherich spent three months in Ceylon studying the white ant. He describes thirty-five species of termite existing in Ceylon.

In the nest (the *termetarium*) of many of the species of white ants there are tunnels and chambers devoted to the growing of a certain fungus—real fungus gardens. Sometimes two different species of termite inhabit the same nest, or termites and ants. They live in different galleries which intermingle but never open into each other. If by the breaking of a wall they should come together fierce battles ensue. Sometimes other insects, certain beetles, for instance, live with the termites as guests, to whom they even feed the larvæ. Their presence is probably a protection against their enemies; and they seem to have many. An army of marauding ants will sometimes invade the nest and seek to carry off the occupants.

There are several distinct castes in the social organization of the termites; the queen, the males, the soldiers, the workers and the larvæ. The queen is enormous in size as compared with the workers; sometimes three inches long. And exalted to the throne she never moves

again, but confines her activities to the laying of eggs, which she deposits at the rate of several thousand a day. But more remarkable than either her size or her ugliness is the fact (stated by Escherich) that she sweats out to the surface of her body a substance which is eagerly devoured by the workers. It is this "exudate" which binds them to her and for which they feed and cherish her. The workers are continually licking her and Escherich declares that he saw one worker tear out a piece of the mother's hide and eagerly drink the liquid which flowed from the wound. And as her body was scarred in many places it would seem that this was not uncommon.

A certain "ant-exterminator" has been used successfully in destroying the white ant. It consists of a charcoal stove on one side of which is a hand-pump and on the other a hose. A powder of eighty-five parts of arsenic and fifteen parts of sulphur is thrown upon the glowing charcoal and by means of the pump and the hose the fumes are forced into the nest. Then the entrance is plugged and the nest is left thus for several days.

But perhaps somebody is asking why an insect so wonderful and interesting should be destroyed at all. And that reminds me that I classified the white ant as a pest—and one of the worst pests in Africa.

When the white ant devours an object, a dead branch, for instance, it works inside, consumes the whole interior and leaves the thinnest shell of an exterior, an empty shape, which yields at a touch and falls into dust or nothing. And unless one watches very closely, or provides some special protection, it will do this same thing with his house or the furniture in it, or the wooden posts under it. White men's houses are built upon posts and elevated several feet from the ground. A post beneath the house, though of the hardest wood, and appearing to the eye to

be quite sound, may in fact be a hollow cylinder which will collapse at a kick. Iron pillars are now generally used instead of wood, iron being about the only substance which the white ant cannot eat. But one must watch the iron pillars closely for the earthen tunnel leading from the ground to the wooden beams above ; for once they get into a house they can never be gotten out. A board in the floor will collapse, or a trunk, of which they have left only a shell. They are very fond of paper ; so one must especially watch his library, or some day he will take down his favourite poet only to find that there is nothing of it but cover and the edges of the leaves. I know this very thing to have happened.

I contracted a special prejudice against them when they came out of the floor into my barrel of sermons—and I remembered the particular quality of food they are supposed to relish. I was not using those sermons in Africa and it is not likely I should ever have used them again anywhere ; neither am I the victim of any delusion in regard to the loss that the world sustained in their destruction. The loss was mine alone, and was chiefly sentimental. But a minister usually has a unique regard for his sermons, a regard proportioned to the extent that they represent the sweat of the brain and the heart. In this instance the destruction was only partial ; for by a mere accident I discovered them before they had entirely chewed and digested all my sermons.

These are a few of the most troublesome insect pests, and there are others.

There is the big flying beetle, purblind and stupid, that comes in the evening and looks the size of a bat ; that circles around the table several times, with a noisy boom, tumbles at length into the gravy and then flops into your face. There is the hippo fly, like an enormous horsefly, that thrusts a stiletto into one through his cloth-

ing. In the upper part of the Gaboon River, where navigation with a launch was dangerous and I stood constantly by the engine, I had a boy, sometimes two boys, standing beside me with fly-brushes to keep them off.

There are caterpillars the very touch of whose hair is poisonous and produces an irritation of the skin. There are wasps that daub nests of mud on frames and furniture and even on clothing if it is left hanging for a while without being disturbed. In many parts there are myriads of may-flies that swarm about sunset, that is, about dinner-time. Sir Harry Johnston complains that these may-flies give soup an aromatic flavour. There is the boring beetle that burrows into the rafters, reducing them to dust. There is the *walking-stick*, a slender dead twig, six or eight inches long, with lateral stems, which you sometimes find hanging to your curtains or mosquito-net, and which, when you take it in your fingers to throw it out, suddenly spreads aborted wings, nearly transparent and of purple hue, and flies around you, a creature of only one magnitude—length without breadth; a conglomeration of dark lines plunging through the air. Then, startled out of your wits, you think you have seen the devil for sure.

I have not touched upon the numerous internal parasites that prey upon humanity. Only a scientific expert ought to risk telling extensively of these incredibilities. Among them is the *eye-worm*, one of the *Filaria*, which in spite of its euphonious name is an abomination. It is a white, thread-like worm, an inch long, that goes all through the body beneath the epidermis. It becomes visible only in the white of the eye, and while there a doctor can remove it. But it must be done, not only with extreme care, but promptly, for it does not stay long in one place. It is extremely irritating in the eye, but in other parts of the body, although it causes distressful itching, it is not so irritating as one would expect. It

sometimes causes swelling, especially in the back of the hand. Every few days my forearm or my hand was swollen from the presence of this worm. I have seen a ridge across the nose where a colony was passing. I have been told that the eye-worm and the worm that circulates beneath the epidermis are not identical. I am not sure about it ; but I hope there are not two of them.

The guinea-worm belongs to the same family, with the beautiful name, the *Filaria*. The larva enters the human body in drinking-water and makes its way to the subcutaneous tissue of its host's leg, where it often causes serious abscesses. It grows rapidly, curling round and round and raising the skin. It often reaches a length of ten feet and sometimes more.

All African houses are infested with rats and mice. The white man has introduced the cat. But there are still very few and they are so highly valued that among the Fang in late years a cat has been made a part of the dowry which a man pays for his wife. It was several months after our first house was built at Efulen before we were able to procure a cat from the coast. In that time the rats had full possession of the house and merely tolerated us. They gambolled all night over the beds in which we were sleeping, and over ourselves, sometimes even getting under the cover. I had always abhorred them, and I was led to use a mosquito-net, not for mosquitoes, but to keep the rats out. I never got so used to them but that I sprang out of bed whenever they got into it. Finding that the mosquito-net did not altogether suffice, I hit upon the happy expedient of keeping a lamp lighted in my room all night. This was effective to some extent, but only by driving them into the rooms occupied by my fellow missionaries, Dr. Good and Mr. Kerr, whose abhorrence of them, however, was not equal to mine. They wondered why I kept the lamp burning, but I did

not tell them; for if we all had lamps the rats would have no choice of room, and surely a man has some right to profit by his own discovery. I desisted from this practice as soon as Dr. Good solved my purpose, which he did one night after he had gone to bed, and instantly announced it with a shout.

But at last a new missionary arrived in the shape of a gray cat, and we welcomed her with a lavish entertainment of sport and feast, delicately adapted to the instinct and the palate of her feline ladyship. All that night there was wild riot in the pantry where we had put her. In the morning that cat was the shape of a beer-barrel; and, besides, there lay on the pantry floor nine dead rats.

When I slept in native houses I always wore socks at night. The natives declare that the rats attack them during sleep, especially their feet. And they say that the rat blows upon the wound that it makes so that the sleeper will not feel it. From this belief there is a current proverb which they apply to a flatterer, or to one who, while using smooth words, would inflict an injury: "He blows upon the wound that he makes."

The natives are perhaps more afraid of snakes than anything else, and with good reason. Africa is the home of deadly snakes. Most of them are nocturnal, and as the white man stays within doors at night, he may be in Africa many months before he realizes how abundant they are. Whenever it was necessary to go out at night, I always carried a long staff which I pushed along the path ahead of me.

One of our schoolboys at Gaboon, one night about eight o'clock, was walking down towards the beach in the middle of a wide road, when he stepped on a small snake. It bit him, and in about half an hour he died in great agony. At Batanga a woman one night, stepping

out of her door, placed her foot on a snake that was coiled upon the door-step. She was bitten and died immediately. Sometimes they get into the thatch roofs of the houses, and between the bamboo walls; but this rarely happens in the better houses in which the white man lives. One of our missionary ladies at Benito, while she was sick in bed with fever, found a snake coiled under her pillow.

The natives upon being bitten by a snake immediately cauterize the wound with a red-hot iron; or, when that is not procurable, they will cut out a piece of the flesh around it, often cutting off a finger or a toe to save a life. They seem to have the idea that all snakes are deadly, and if one ask, in regard to a particular snake, whether it is poisonous, the certain response will be an exclamation of astonishment at his ignorance. They solemnly declare in regard to many varieties that they will spring at a man and go straight through his body. This is a strange delusion, considering their usual accuracy of observation and knowledge in regard to animals. It is probably accounted for by the superstitions that attach to snakes. In many African tribes the snake is sacred. In those tribes they are frequently used by the priests as an ordeal in discovering criminals. The people are ranged 'about the priest, who is a snake-charmer. He passes around bringing the snake into contact with each person. The person whom it bites is adjudged guilty.

The characteristic snakes, especially the deadly vipers which abound, are of bright and variegated colours, green, red, yellow and black. Some call them beautiful, but in most of us the association of ideas makes it impossible for us to see any beauty in a snake. Their colours are the very colours of nature around them; and therefore, instead of making them conspicuous, are really an approximation to invisibility—though I believe that the

protective colouration of animals, as a principle, has been exaggerated.

A recent traveller says that in crossing the entire continent of Africa he saw only two snakes, and he adds that since he succeeded in killing both of them there are now no snakes in Africa, so far as he knows. I am reminded of a vivid experience when an American friend, Mr. Northam, stayed some months in Gaboon and collected biological specimens. Mr. Northam asked me whether there were many snakes around Gaboon. I told him that there were very few. At his suggestion I told my school-boys that he wished to collect snakes and would give them something for all the valuable snakes they would bring to him. The immediate result was enough to make a man think that he had been suddenly precipitated into a state of delirium tremens. I had not supposed that there were so many snakes in all Africa. A continual procession of boys passed my door, each with some horrible kind of snake dangling from a stick, or dragging along the ground. And I had said there were but few snakes in Gaboon! The explanation is that I kept to the paths while abroad, and snakes are seldom found in the paths in the daytime; for they are mostly nocturnal in their habits, and I was not. But the boys know where to find them at any time.

After all, life in Africa is quite tolerable. As I think back over this formidable array of pests, I am somewhat surprised that I was not more conscious of them while in Africa, and that I had leisure to do anything else but fight them. The explanation is that, although one is fighting some of them all the time, one is never fighting them all at the same time.

## VII

### THE "CANNIBAL" FANG

"**T**HE Mpongwe have plenty of salt in them," said one of my boat-boys. He was a Fang, and he was speaking of the coast tribe.

"The Mpongwe have plenty of salt," he repeated. I drew out my note-book and credited the boy with a very interesting and expressive designation of a moral quality. Such an improvement on our word *sand*! It was not less interesting, however, when I found that he meant it not morally, but literally—that he was speaking not metaphorically, but gastronomically. As a matter of fact, not one of these boat-boys had ever tasted human flesh, and they would have been insulted at the imputation of cannibalism; but it is not long since their fathers emerged from cannibalism, and tradition still distinguishes the flesh of the various surrounding tribes, ascribing a preferable flavour to this or that tribe. It is generally understood that the coast tribes are better flavoured than those of the interior.

The Fang are nearly always referred to as the *cannibal* Fang; and the casual reader might suppose that they were the worst cannibals in Africa. But the cannibalism of the Fang does not compare, either in extent or hideousness, with that of the Congo tribes, as we shall see.

The Fang is one of the largest and most important of the West African tribes. For many years they have been moving from the far interior towards the coast, burning, killing and even eating their way through the older coast



A FANG FAMILY.



tribes. They have now emerged at many points along the coast, of which Gaboon was probably the first. The tributaries of the Gaboon form a network of waterways, which are also the highways. There are but few bush roads in this part of the jungle and they are of the worst kind; in the wet season mud to the knees alternating with water to the waist, and deeper. Along the rivers and streams the Fang have built their towns. The population of a town varies from fifty to two hundred.

Most of my work was done among the Fang. From Baraka I reached their towns by boat and canoe, in later years by the launch *Dorothy*.

The Fang are brown, not black in colour, and are several shades lighter than the coast tribes. Their colour is quite to their liking. They regard themselves as far better looking than white people. The men are usually tall, athletic and remarkably well formed, though not as full in the chest as a perfect physique would require. Most of the younger men are fairly good looking. Many of the younger women have pretty faces, but they are not nearly as intelligent looking as the men. Many of the children are beautiful, with sweet faces and lovely eyes.

"They think they are better looking than white people." And why not? I myself do not so regard them; but I may be wrong. Questions of beauty are decided by reference to some standard in the mind; but whether the standard depends upon custom, and varies with it, is a matter of doubt and dispute. My own judgment, like that of others, was modified as I lived among the black people. Sir Joshua Reynolds advanced the notion, according to Hazlitt, that beauty was entirely dependent on custom. I feel, with Hazlitt himself, that custom, though powerful, is not the only principle of our preference for the appearance of certain objects more than

others ; that what constitutes beauty is in some way inherent in the object, and that "if custom is a second nature there is another nature which ranks above it." Hazlitt in his argument contrasts the Greek and the African face, doing injustice, I believe, to the latter. Yet in general one must admit that Hazlitt is right. In the Greek face he finds a conformity to itself, a symmetry of feature with feature and a subtle, involuted harmony of lines, which he says is wholly wanting in the African face. The Greek face is beautiful, "because it is made up of lines corresponding with or melting into each other ;" the African face is not so, "because it is made up almost entirely of contradictory lines and sharp angular projections."

"The general principle of difference between the two heads is this : The forehead of the Greek is square and upright, and, as it were, overhangs the rest of the face, except the nose, which is a continuation of it almost in an even line. In the Negro, or African, the tip of the nose is the most projected part of the face ; and from that point the features retreat back, both upwards towards the forehead, and downwards towards the chin. This last form is an approximation to the shape of the head of the animal, as the former bears the strongest stamp of humanity."

The African physiognomy, he further observes, is made up of jagged, cross-grained lines, starting out in every oblique direction, and in fact appears "splitting in pieces."

But the African physiognomy is also consistent with itself ; its abruptness is uniform. There is regularity in the violence of its changes ; and may not this also constitute beauty to an accustomed eye ? It is certain that there is in such a face the possibility of an extraordinary expression of grandeur and moral force ; and these also

are aspects of beauty, as well as the intellectual and affectional elements that constitute the expression of the Greek face. There is a beauty of mountains as well as of meadows.

However it may be, we who have lived long among the Africans, and without the distemper of racial prejudice, do invariably find that our ideas, or our standards, gradually undergo such a change that the African face appears to us in varying degrees of beauty, much as that of the white; beauty which at first we did not see. Even the nose, which bears a striking resemblance to the ace of clubs, at length, with custom, ceases to appear ugly, and seems the absolutely proper nose for the African physiognomy. And they surely have beautiful eyes.

Yet one must admit that it is not eyes, nor noses, nor even faces, but legs, that are most in evidence in African society. I suppose it is because we are not used to seeing those honourable and useful members exposed that they are so conspicuous. Looking at an African crowd, especially when seated on the ground as in a village service or listening to a native "palaver," with their knees elevated in front of them, there seems to be ten times as many legs as people. Their variety also commands attention. There are long legs and short legs, lean legs and fat legs, straight legs and crooked legs, gnarled legs, knotted legs, brown legs and black legs.

Probably nowhere in the world is life more primitive. How little a man can live on! How much he can do without! An African can be happy with a pot, a pipe and a tom-tom. I have shown some of them a wheel for the first time, making use of a toy, and have explained its use while they wondered. At Vivi, on the Congo, they tell that when they began to build the railroad they unloaded a shipment of wheelbarrows and ordered the

workmen to use them in removing the débris. A little later they observed the workmen marching in single file with the loaded wheelbarrows on their heads. They have only the vaguest idea of passing time. They never know their own ages, of course ; neither can they understand why anybody should want to know. A man of middle age makes a serious guess that he is ten years old. A French judge in Senegal tells how that a man, brought before him, gave his age as five years—when he had been weaned at least twenty-five.

The Fang when they first come from the interior go almost entirely naked. The men wear a bit of bark-cloth, the women a few leaves, children to the age of nine or ten years wear nothing. But as soon as they come in contact with coast people they all begin to wear imported cloth. A chief soon attains the dignity of a shirt. If they have little use for clothes they are passionately fond of ornamentation. When they first come from the interior they are fairly loaded with beads and brass, the latter made into heavy arm-rings, leg-rings, neck-rings and coiled bracelets which cover the entire forearm. At first they regard clothes also as ornamentation and they think that white people, in comparison with them, are exceedingly vain.

I was holding a service in a Bulu town when a woman entered and immediately engaged the attention of the feminine portion of the audience. On the-preceding day she had visited the mission and I had dressed and bandaged an ulcer on her leg. The white bandage had caught her fancy and she removed it that she might keep it clean ; and now she came to the service with it round her neck. The women looked at her, drew a long loud breath and nudged their neighbours. It was very plain that in their opinion she was much overdressed. And, strange to say, she impressed me in that same way. At

least, compared with the others, she looked as if she might be dressed for a sleigh-ride.

The staple food of the Fang is cassava—that which Stanley calls *mantoo*—which is the root of a shrub, a little like our elder in appearance, from which our tapioca is prepared. They use it however in a much coarser form than tapioca. The root is left macerating in water for several days which has the effect of removing certain poisonous principles. Then it is placed in a wooden trough and beaten into a mass with a wooden pestle. After this it is made into straight slender rolls a foot long, wrapped in plantain leaves, bound around with fibre and boiled. It tastes a little like boiled tapioca. But whereas we are accustomed to eat the tasteless tapioca with cream and sugar, the native has neither of these and thinks himself very fortunate if he has a little salt to season it. Sometimes in travelling I have used it for several days; but I have improved it by frying it in butter. The cassava when properly prepared is evidently wholesome; but one may frequently see it soaking in a dirty, stagnant pool, the same pool that the whole town has used, for that and other purposes, week after week and month after month. No one can imagine the variety of germs that it may soak up during the several days that it lies in such a pool. The native is chronically full of worms. He knows it and attributes most pain to their presence. In declaring that he has a headache he places his hand on his forehead and says: "Worms are biting me." A little kind teaching in the better preparation of their food would be good missionary employment.

Besides cassava, they have plantains, bananas, sweet potatoes, corn, groundnuts and a few other foods that are less common. None of these food products are indigenous. Most of them, including even cassava, it is said,

were introduced by the Portuguese, at intervals within the last three hundred years. Meat is not regarded as a necessity, although there is a chronic hunger for it, to which some have attributed their practice of cannibalism. In most towns there are a few goats and sheep and chickens; but they are reserved for feasts and festive occasions. They hunt and trap all the wild animals of the forest and are not averse to eating any of them, including snakes, even in an advanced stage of decomposition. On the lower Gaboon they have abundance of fish, which they catch with various baskets, nets, and seines. There are certain insects, grubs and caterpillars which they also eat. One day a boy reported to me that the natives of a near-by town had found a bee-tree, and they wished to know whether I would buy the honey. Buy it! I should think so! I could scarcely wait for it. They brought it at length; but instead of smoking the bees *out*, they had smoked them *in*; they offered me a great mass of honey and grubs and dead bees.

They do not eat eggs; neither do they ever drink milk or use it in any form and our use of it is somewhat disgusting to them. A friend once offered milk to a Kru-boy just to try him, and he replied contemptuously: "Milk be fit only for piccaninny; I no be piccaninny."

They have seen white men milk the goat, which always requires a number of natives to hold the animal. And once when Mr. Gault of Batanga was explaining to a group of natives about the cow, which gives the milk that we import in tins, describing her size and her great horns, one of the natives suddenly turning to the others exclaimed: "Say, he is lying. How could they hold her?" Since that time most of them have seen cattle.

The Fang wife prepares the food for her husband and sets it in the *palaver-house*, or public-house of the town, where he eats with the other men. She does not

eat with them. There is no regular time in the day for eating; and when they have begun to eat there is no regular time for stopping. The quantity of food is the only limit. On a journey they can go without food a very long time, far surpassing the endurance of the white man. And they are often compelled to travel with empty stomachs from their habit of eating all their food the first day. But afterwards they will make up for this abstinence, however prolonged. Indeed, it is by their gluttony, rather than in other ways, that they first exhibit their degradation to the white man. I have said that the children were usually pretty; but sometimes they are dreadfully misshapen by a distended stomach. The last mail brought me a charming picture of a little three-year-old missionary boy of Gaboon, prodding the stomach of a native child with his finger, and with eyes of wonder, asking: "Is dat your tummy?"

One of their first efforts, after coming in contact with the white man, is an attempt to acquire the noble art of eating with a spoon. But in the first practice of it if they forget themselves for a moment they are very likely to put the hand to the mouth in the old way and drive the spoon round to the ear. Considering their ignorance they are surprisingly cleanly in their persons and their habits. After eating they invariably rinse their mouths with water and they regularly brush their teeth. For the latter purpose they commonly use a brush of soft wood with transverse ridges. They are very particular about this. Often a carrier in the bush will carry his brush along with him. Sometimes it is the sum-total of his personal effects. Everybody knows that the African has beautiful teeth. But in some tribes, and even among the Fang of the far interior, they often file the front teeth to a point, thinking to add to their beauty, but in fact adding greatly to their ugliness.

I have said that the Fang are cannibals. But this loathsome custom is not as common among them as travellers have generally reported. I doubt whether the Fang eat any, but their enemies—captives taken in war. And their chronic meat-hunger is not the only reason for eating their enemies. It is done as an insult to the enemy, the most deadly insult that can be offered, and means that the war will be fought to a finish, or at least until the other side has eaten one of the enemy. But the practice of cannibalism in war is intimately related to fetishism. It is believed that after eating one of the enemy, the latter can do them no harm. Their bullets will glance harmlessly off their bodies, or will even go through them without hurting, if indeed they hit them at all. Cannibalism affords them the strongest possible fetish protection.

The cannibalism of the Upper Congo tribes is much worse than this and is almost indescribable. Some of them eat their own dead. Sir Harry Johnston tells us that the Basoko tribe bury none but their chiefs. Others, who would not eat their own dead, exchange them for the dead of a neighbouring clan.

This vicious taste often becomes a mania with the African, an obsession, like the ungovernable appetite for rum, until he thinks of man chiefly as food to satisfy this craving. Among such tribes raids are made on their neighbours for the express purpose of cannibalism. Sir Harry Johnston speaks of the son of a celebrated chief who once exclaimed: "Ah! I wish I could eat everybody on earth!" and also of a Bangala chief who ate his seven wives in succession, inviting his friends and close associates to the feast. It is more than possible that these lowest forms of cannibalism are due to the demoralization incident to the slave-raids of the Arabs. The Arabs were succeeded by the Belgians; but some of

those who are best qualified to judge think that the régime of the Belgians has been worse than that of the Arabs.

Among tribes to whom such forms of cannibalism would be revolting, there are probably individual inhuman ghouls, who exhume the bodies of the dead in the night and eat them. And it may be from this fact that witches are always accused of eating people.

If it be true, then, throughout the entire Fang tribe, that they eat only their enemies it will be seen that their cannibalism is very different in extent and even in loathsomeness from that of some other tribes. It is a fact, however, that the cannibal tribes are not necessarily lower than the others, but may be quite as gentle and tractable and quite as capable. And from this some have argued that, after all, our horror of cannibalism is purely conventional, due to custom and training ; and that there is no essential difference between eating human flesh and that of the lower animals, except in imagination. But the readiness with which whole tribes renounce the custom, become ashamed of it, and contract the white man's abhorrence for it, confirms the belief that it is never legitimate and must always be regarded as a vice. In such matters imagination may be closer to our moral natures than we know.

A certain town on the Gaboon named *Alum*—when I left Africa I knew personally most of the men, women and children of the town—is populated by one of the most intractable clans of the Fang. Though peculiarly fierce in war, they are otherwise gentle and courteous. The venerable chief I regarded as a particular friend. He had a long beard—somewhat rare among the Fang and highly esteemed. It was braided tightly and tied on the end with a string as venerable as the beard itself. The braid was not for fashion or beauty. It was intended to

prevent the possible loss of stray hairs that might fall into the hands of an enemy and be used as a powerful fetish against him. Upon my leaving the town at the conclusion of a visit it was in accord with custom for him to express his personal regard for me by taking my hand in his and spitting in it. In order to appreciate this beautiful custom one must regard it spiritually—if he can. It is called “blowing a blessing.” The blessing is blown with the breath and the spitting is a trivial accessory.

It was when these people first migrated from the interior bush that the following incident occurred—which was told to me by Sonia of Gaboon who knew all the persons concerned. A certain man’s wife having several times eloped with a man of another town and having caused the husband much trouble and humiliation, he at last became so enraged that instead of seeking to procure her return he determined upon a bloody revenge. With several companions he immediately started in a canoe for the town where her father and mother lived, arriving before they had heard the news of their daughter’s latest elopement. At some distance from the town they left the canoe and entered the forest. All the others of the party hid themselves near the path while the man himself went on to the town and professed to have come just to make his mother-in-law a friendly visit. Addressing her as *Mother*, he told her that he had killed a bush-pig in the forest and that he had come to ask her to go with him to get some of it before he should take it home. The woman, without doubting, followed him along the path.

After a while she said : “Son, it is far and I am old.”

He told her that it was only a short distance ahead ; so she went on.

Soon again she exclaimed : “Ah, son, it is very far and I am old.”

He replied that it was now very near, thus enticing her far from town.

At last he exclaimed : " Mother, here it is ! "

At his word the party in ambush sprang upon her and with their swords killed her. They then cut from her body one entire leg, which they took to their town and ate. He had avenged his injured dignity and had removed his shame. He had no longer any reason to feel ashamed !

He sent a brief message to the unfaithful wife : " Stay where you are ; the palaver is finished. "

I must say that this incident is not fairly representative of the African savage. Not that it exaggerates his brutality, when he is enraged ; but there is in it an element of treachery which is oriental rather than African. He does not usually conceal his anger, but hastens to express it in passionate words. And when one has succeeded in allaying his passion and soothing his feelings, and he has again smiled and sworn friendship, one may reckon assuredly that the palaver is ended and that the smile does not conceal malice nor intent of revenge. He is passionate but not vindictive, cruel but not treacherous.

A few years have made such changes that the Fang of the Gaboon, instead of boasting of cannibalism, would indignantly deny it. In the interior they still practice it as an insult to the enemy. But on the Gaboon they insult the enemy by charging it against them.

" The African, " says Booker T. Washington, " lives like a child, in the realm of emotion and feeling. " And a white man among Africans lives much in that same realm. His experience is largely a succession of contrasting emotions. Sick with disgust and hopelessness, when brought into contact with such loathsome features of degradation as we have been considering, he consigns

the whole black race to perdition, and anon some pathetic circumstance reveals a wealth of moral possibilities, which touches the heart and makes him ashamed; some unconscious action of real friendship and confidence in the white man, it may be; some expression of the profound affection on the part of a savage towards his mother and children; or some rude work of art which he displays with pride, something upon which he has expended astonishing labour for beauty's sake alone—crude enough, to be sure, but giving “thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.” He has a shapely stool which he cuts out of a solid block of light mahogany, with only one tool, a rude adz of his own making. He has absolutely no knowledge of joinery, so he cuts it out of the solid block, expending upon it an amount of patient labour of which he is usually considered incapable. He also pyrographs it with artistic decorations. Why all this labour when the solid block itself is quite as serviceable, and far more stable? He has an inward sense of beauty to which he must make it conform, an ideal which commands him and which he strives to execute. The brass handle of his sword he decorates by ingenious and not unskillful repoussé designs. The mats that the women weave are decorated with patterns in colours, requiring care and skill in their making.

The curiosity of those who have not seen a white man before, or are not used to seeing him, is unbounded and at first attaches to everything that he possesses. Magic is their easy explanation of everything they do not understand. A match (until they become accustomed to it) will scatter a crowd as quickly as a Gatling gun. It is the supernatural of which they are most afraid; as with us, those who believe in ghosts are more afraid of them than the worst of living enemies.

Nothing of ours is more wonderful or more desired

than the looking-glass. Yet they are not always conceited in regard to their appearance. One poor interior woman, seeing her face in the looking-glass for the first time, sank to the ground with a little cry, and said : " I did not think I was so ugly."

Their wonder is not always directed as we would expect. It is not the greatest achievement that excites the greatest wonder. One day, after my return to America, in company with a friend I was passing one of the greatest buildings of Chicago, when the friend said : " What would your Africans think of such a building ? "

" My Africans," I replied (pointing to a man on the corner with a tin monkey climbing a string), " would be so entirely occupied with that tin monkey climbing a string that you could not get them to look at the building."

In the invention of the monkey they would have some comprehension of the difficulties to be overcome, while not knowing how it had been accomplished ; hence the mystery. But in the case of the great building they have no present knowledge which would enable them in any measure to realize the difficulties, or the principles involved. The African wonders most at those things which bear some relation to his present knowledge. For wonder is not exactly an expression of ignorance, as it has been called, but rather an expression of imperfect knowledge.

All things in our possession of which they did not know the use were regarded as fetishes. I wore glasses when studying. One day at Efulen I came out of the house with the glasses on. A group of women were standing in front of the house ; and several of them, seeing me look at them through the glasses, fell flat on the ground ; whereupon I discovered that they supposed my glasses were a fetish by which I might (as one of them

said) turn them into monkeys. They supposed that we were "spirits," and so they called us. Looking at my black shoes one of them exclaimed : "The spirit's hands and face are white, but his feet are black, and I suppose the rest of his body is black."

Another said : "The spirit has feet, but he has no toes."

Another said : "What an ugly colour ! But he would be a beauty if he were black."

Dear reader : Were you ever an object of curiosity ? Of course you have been on some single occasion—for a passing moment, or even a whole evening. But I mean day after day, and all the time, for an indefinite period. If so, you have my profound sympathy.

## VIII

### MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

**T**HE Fang is a resourceful man, though he has no genius for mechanical invention. He wrests from nature all that he needs and does not depend upon his neighbour.

He lives in a house of bark or bamboo with a roof of thatch, for which he gathers the materials, and builds it all himself. In his primitive condition his only clothing is bark-cloth which he skillfully hammers out of fibrous bark. With the fibre of the pineapple, he weaves a powder-pouch, or other similar convenience. He makes himself an excellent canoe and is scarcely surpassed as an expert in its management. He is also a fisherman ; and he knits his own fish-net. For the latter he now uses imported string ; but without the imported string he could use some vegetable fibre. If he wishes to improve his primitive bed of poles he makes a grass mat. An old woman one day taught me the art of mat-making. I sat beside her at the loom, in the street, and worked under her supervision until she declared me quite proficient—so much so, she said with some anxiety, that there was no need of my doing any more. The African's knowledge, too, however meagre, is as varied as his skill. As he becomes civilized he will specialize. There will be division of labour in the community and mutual dependence upon one another. No doubt he will gain much ; but he will also lose something, he will lose in resourcefulness ; he will lose something of freedom and the spirit of independence. And unless he gain much in that which is

moral and spiritual, his loss will be a misfortune wholly grievous.

I venture the statement that the African is not lazy—at least not *very* lazy. He is idle not so much because he hates work, but rather because he is unambitious and the unfortunate victim of a habit of content. He will not work for the sake of working, because, unlike the white man, he can be supremely content in idleness. But offer him something that he really desires or deems worth while and he will work amazingly. There are only one or two things that the African will work for; that is to say there are only one or two things that he wants.

He will work to earn a dowry in order to marry; especially if he has in mind some particular woman as the prospective wife. Month after month he will labour and even for a year or two he will engage in the hardest work. But just as the white master is about to reverse his opinion of the whole black race and proclaim that they are the greatest workers in the world the man completes the amount of the dowry, and immediately he quits. No inducement will tempt him to continue. To offer him double wages would only lower his estimate of your intelligence. He will work for an end that he desires; but the ordinary motives of the white man do not appeal to him at all. He will never work for the mere sake of accumulating wealth.

The men do all the building, and when a new garden is made the men cut down the trees. Their hardest work is incident to war or hunting, but it is occasional, and most of their time is spent in absolute idleness. The regular work is done by the women. It is chiefly that of caring for the gardens (which are sometimes far from the town), carrying home the produce, gathering wood and carrying it from the forest, and cooking the food.

They rise at daylight and start for the gardens, leaving the care of the babies to older children or to their husbands. I have seen the husband of six wives taking care of several hungry babies whose mothers have been long in the gardens ; and it seemed to me that he, rather than the wives, had the heavier end of the domestic responsibilities.

There is one other instinct besides that of matrimony that will stir the dormant energy of the native, and that is the love of driving a bargain. He is a born trader. But if prices, however high, should become hopelessly fixed, and shrewdness have no advantage, I am not sure that he would care any more for the trade.

Wherever a foreign government has not interfered with African custom the produce of the interior, chiefly rubber and ivory, is carried from the far interior, in brief stages, by successive caravans. The original owners of the ivory start coastward in a company. Beyond a certain limit they cannot go, as the people will not allow them to pass. They must give over the ivory to others who will carry it over the next stage and in turn deliver it to others. There may be five or six stages in the journey to the coast. The first company when they deliver the produce to the next do not return home but remain in the town of the second company until their return, often assuming their marital relations in their absence. The second company does the same in regard to the third, and the others likewise. Since the goods received in payment must come from the coast, no bargain is made until the return journey. The last company carries the ivory to the coast and obtains goods in payment, returning to their town, where the preceding company is waiting. Then follows a great palaver and oceans of oratory. The company in possession seek to keep as large a portion as possible of the goods and to give

as little as possible to the interior people. The palaver at last being settled, this company starts for home and again, after an exciting palaver, divides the goods with the next company, whom they find still waiting for them. This is repeated with each successive stage until at last the original owners, after weeks of waiting, get a small remainder of the goods, or at least a souvenir, for their ivory. The principal satisfaction is perhaps not the actual amount of the goods, but the big palaver, and the driving of a shrewd bargain.

With the establishment of the European government this trade method is sooner or later reversed. The white trader sends native sub-traders into the interior to buy produce as directly as possible from the original owners. This cuts off the people of the intermediate stages from what they regard as their exclusive right of participation as middlemen. The dissatisfaction usually grows until it ends in war. Germany in her various colonies is frequently engaged in this one-sided war ; and she wages it ruthlessly.

Meantime the Fang of the lower Gaboon and some other tribes similarly situated have found far better employment. The Fang raise food—cassava and plantains—for the market at Libreville. For there are usually about seventy-five white men in Gaboon, all of whom eat plantains ; and there are throngs of natives, servants of the white men, and others employed by the government. Besides, the Mpongwe women, except the Christians, are mostly unwilling to care for gardens and they must buy food for themselves and their families. The Fang therefore can easily sell all the food they can raise. In the morning looking from the mission-house one may see the bay covered with white sails like a flock of sea-gulls—the sails of the Fang canoes bringing food to the market. This is surely the best fortune that can fall to any people



FANG TRADERS WITH IVORY.



in West Africa. While it still gives opportunity for their trade instinct, it turns them to agriculture, the most wholesome of all occupations for such a people. It keeps them at home, provides healthful work, extends opportunity to all and distributes prosperity.

The white man in setting out for Africa divests himself of every superfluous possession and provides only for the bare necessities of life. If he is bound for the interior he must feel that he has consecrated himself to poverty. It is strange, therefore, and surprising to find the natives regarding his meagre stock of goods as fabulous wealth and himself as a sort of multi-millionaire. But it is stranger still that he himself should gradually accept their judgment and regard himself as rich. For the sense of wealth depends upon having more than one's neighbours; and there is no feeling of privation in not being able to procure those things that nobody else has. The white man's privations may be many, but they are inevitable; he has all that is procurable in his situation, and far more than those around him. He therefore has a comfortable feeling of wealth, the more pleasant because unexpected.

But this attitude of the natives towards the white man, especially in new tribes, forebodes trouble. There is not much danger of robbery or violence, but there is danger to his moral influence. A kind of communism obtains among them. A man having our "abundance" would divide with the men of his town, all of whom are related to him. If a man hunting in the forest should kill a monkey or a python he will bring it to his town before he cuts it up and it will be divided equally. For this reason it is very hard to buy any game from them; no one person has authority to sell it. Even at the coast and in the old semi-civilized settlements, when a native, after being employed by a white man, returns to his town

with his wages he will be expected to assist everybody in the town who happens to want anything and has not the price—and there are always some of them who want to get married and have not succeeded in raising the dowry. So the wages of a hard year's work are dissipated in less than a month. It is hard, but it is custom. It cannot be denied that the custom fosters an easy-going content and precludes the unhappiness and cruelty of worldly ambition. But, with ambition, energy also and industry are discouraged and a premium is put upon laziness. The tyranny of custom in Africa and other uncivilized lands is not easy for those to realize who have not witnessed it. It is "the only infallible rule of faith and practice."

The people of the interior, when the white man first goes among them, invariably expect him to divide his goods with them just as soon as they understand that he professes to be their friend. Such a profession seems hypocrisy while he keeps his goods. They can yield intellectual assent when he reasons that the white man has a right to his own customs; but in the consideration of a particular custom it still remains that theirs is right and his is wrong; and when they actually see the goods, greed masters reason and they are often enraged.

All worldly prosperity in Africa depends upon the possession of proper fetishes. They are therefore quick to conclude that we have very powerful fetishes; and it is inevitable that before long they should conclude that the Bible is the missionary's fetish. At Efulen, among the Bulu, when we had been there but a short time, a band of men, setting out upon the war-path with their guns upon their shoulders, marched up to our hill and asked if we would give them a Bible to take with them to make their guns shoot straight and procure their success. One day Dr. Good missed a Bible. It had been stolen. He heard nothing of it for a month; after which he was one day

walking through a native village where the people, expecting to go to war next day, were preparing a very powerful fetish or "war-medicine" by boiling together in a pot several of their most reliable fetishes; and in the boiling pot he found his Bible.

Perhaps it is the frequency of war between towns that keeps the people within a town, or in a company, generally at peace among themselves. It is surprising how one can trust workmen or carriers or schoolboys to divide their food without quarrelling. In this respect they far surpass white workmen, or white schoolboys. Where we would expect a quarrel no quarrel occurs.

And then again, just when one has declared that "Africans never quarrel," a scandalous quarrel breaks out over some infinitesimal matter. Individuals, especially women, often have a reputation for quarrelling. Some towns are notorious. I once visited such a town, where no white man had been before. I found the stormiest people I ever met in the jungles. During the two days that I remained in the town there occurred an almost continuous succession of palavers, each of which seemed to involve the whole population of the town—men, women and children. Long after they went into their houses for the night some of them continued yelling their anger loud enough to be heard by all whom it concerned. The occasion of a general quarrel the day that I arrived was this: A certain man's hen had laid an egg in another man's house, and the latter man had kept the egg. The town was rent in twain over the ownership of that egg. Forcible arguments were presented on either side but without avail. Before it was settled something else had happened that required a vigorous exercise of lungs for its adjustment, and the egg palaver was laid on the table. There was not a spare moment in which to resume it before I left, and it may be undecided to this

day. Even while I was preaching, a woman in the congregation, sitting immediately in front of me, continued the palaver, occasionally yelling unladylike remarks to some other woman whom she evidently supposed to be at the end of the universe. In all such quarrels there is much of bluff and bluster, but not so much anger as one might suppose. Such a quarrel, if anything should appeal to their keen sense of the ridiculous during its progress, might break up in a laugh.

When two Fang women engage in a prolonged quarrel—usually sitting immediately within the door of their respective houses and cursing each other in shrill tones, heard all over the town—the people sometimes become impatient and demand that they shall come out into the street and fight. I have witnessed such a fight. They prepare for it by throwing off even the shred of clothing that they wear. They fight more like men than women—if it be true that women usually scratch and pull each other's hair when they fight. When one of them is repeatedly thrown to the ground she confesses defeat. At least it may be said to their credit that this usually ends the matter ; and the next day they may be as friendly as ever.

The marriage relation, of course, dominates all customs and is the foundation of the whole social structure. With the Africans love is not so closely linked with sex as among most modern races. Friendship is deemed nobler than romantic love. This of course is due to the inequality of the sexes ; woman is not regarded as fit for companionship with men. A wife is expected to love her own people more than her husband. A man loves his brothers and his friends at least as much as his wife ; his children he loves far more, and his mother he loves most of all. Indeed, his love of his mother is the deepest emotion of his heart and his best moral quality. The

African young and old thinks he has fully justified the most violent assault upon another when he says: "He cursed my mother." Any uncomplimentary reflection more or less serious is a "curse."

A wife is bought with a price and is part of a man's wealth. A man's wealth is always reckoned by the number of his wives. The chief of the town is the man who has the most wives. But most men have only one wife and some have none, because they cannot procure a dowry. The size of the dowry differs in different tribes. Among the Fang it is enormous, considering their very primitive condition. The following dowry was paid by a Fang near the coast: ten goats, five sheep, five guns, twenty trade-boxes (plain wooden chests of imported material), one hundred heads of tobacco, ten hats, ten looking-glasses, five blankets, five pairs of trousers, two dozen plates, fifty dollars' worth of calico, fifty dollars' worth of rum, one chair (with one leg missing) and one cat.

In addition to such a dowry a man is required to make frequent presents to his wife's relations, who may be expected to arrive at any time, and in any number, for an indefinite visit. If he should fail in this they will induce his wife to run away and return to her town, and it will cost him many presents and perhaps a war to get her back again.

A dowry is often kept intact so as to do service repeatedly. A man is fortunate if he have one or several sisters; for with the dowry which he procures for them he will get himself as many wives. Children are frequently betrothed to each other by their parents. A girl thus betrothed is taken to her husband's town and raised by his mother. Little girls, even infants, are sometimes betrothed to old men. I knew of an instance where a child was betrothed before it was born, the dowry being kept

intact so that it could be returned in case the child should not be a girl. The frequent betrothal of little girls is partly due to the fact that less dowry is paid for a child than for "a whole woman," as the Fang would say.

For those who are not so fortunate as to inherit a dowry or to have a sister the proper thing is to steal a woman from some adjoining town. Most women are glad to be stolen and the affair is often an elopement. This will precipitate a war between the two towns. At least nine out of ten wars among the Fang begin this way. After several or many have been killed the "palaver" is settled by the whole town paying the dowry.

If a man have many wives it is regarded as magnanimous for him to take little notice of infidelity. Seldom, however, does he rise to this level of magnanimity and many wives mean constant palavers. In either case it means boundless immorality.

The aggrieved husband, in a case of adultery, may punish with terrible severity, if he feel so disposed. In some tribes it is punishable with death. In a tribe immediately south of the Fang the injured husband frequently cuts off the ears and even the nose of the guilty woman. In one instance that I knew of, on the Ogowè River, a man cut off his wife's nose and lips. Among the Fang I have never seen such mutilations, but in the far interior the practice is probably not unknown. A man suspecting his wife of wrong-doing, especially after a prolonged absence from town, may upon the impulse of his own suspicion and without a shred of evidence resort to torture to compel a confession. And this recalls to my mind an occasion upon which I administered physical chastisement. I may say that there were three such occurrences during more than twice so many years, and that in each instance the occasion of my wrath was the outrageous treatment of a woman.

One Sunday morning in a town named Angon Nzok, on a branch of the upper Gaboon, I was about to hold a religious service when I heard, in the other end of the town, a woman crying. For a long time she had been moaning and crying in a low tone which had escaped my attention, though I heard it. But now there followed an outburst of piteous cries. I sprang to my feet and ran quickly in the direction of the cries and to the house from which they seemed to issue, but the door was closed as if no one were within.

At first I thought that I had not rightly located the sound, but I was told that a man and his wife were within the closed house, the man torturing his wife to extort a confession of unfaithfulness, and the name of the partner in the wrong. The closed door was a sign, almost sacred to the Fang, that no man must enter, but I disregarded it. The man had returned from a journey, and without the least evidence had accused the woman and had then resorted to torture to extort a confession.

He bound the woman's hands together, palm to palm, by means of two bamboo sticks, which passed across the back of the hands, the ends being tightly bound together. Her hands were then raised above her head and kept there by a cord which was attached to the roof. This mode of torture may not seem horrible as one tells it; but it really is exceedingly painful, and if long continued is enough to drive a woman mad. The man at the moment when I entered was probably tightening the cords or making them more secure; wherefore the screams of the poor woman. In the animated exercise which followed the revelation of what was occurring behind that closed door my mind retains a vivid recollection of three prominent and important movements. The first movement was a kick that broke the door in and landed me in the middle of the cabin; the second was another kick that carried the

man to the door ; the third was another kick that lifted him into the street, where he stood paralyzed with astonishment and rubbing his injuries. It took only a moment to cut the cords and set the woman free. I then went out and found the man, who of course was not much hurt but was greatly humiliated.

"Now," I said to him, "if you will solemnly promise never to do this again, the palaver will be finished and you and I will be friends."

After a brief conversation we vowed eternal friendship and he came to the service. But long after the service the woman was still crying with the pain, while other women poured warm water upon her tortured hands, and murmured their sympathy.

It may be supposed that this man would carry out his purpose when I had left the town, and perhaps with increased severity. But this he would not do. The African is peculiarly superstitious in regard to interruptions. And an interruption so extraordinary in the performance of such an act would be regarded by him as a sign that the act would be attended by misfortune to himself, and he would not repeat it. Nevertheless I thought it well to keep myself carefully informed for some time, so that in case he should act in defiance of superstition he might not be disappointed in his expectation of misfortune.

A man may punish his wife for any misdemeanour or neglect of duty ; and many of them bear upon their backs ugly scars and wounds inflicted by the sword of an enraged husband. However abused, it is vain for her to appeal to the town ; for it is the town of the husband's family, and she is the stranger. And, besides, the saying among them is that you must never tell a woman that she is right, lest she despise her husband.

A source of injustice, in the case of polygamy, is the influence of the head-wife ; for every man who has sev-

eral wives recognizes one of them as the favourite, and head over the others. Not that she sits in idleness while the others work ; for it is more likely that she is the favourite because she works well and cooks well. But she has every opportunity to tyrannize over the other wives and make their lives a bitter bondage. If they desire anything from the husband there is but little chance of obtaining it unless the head-wife favours the request. In a dispute between two of them the husband's judgment would depend upon the head-wife. She exercises authority over all his children, even the children of other wives.

Yet, not to leave an exaggerated impression, it must be said that there is much less quarrelling than one would expect between wives of the same husband. The African wife also has far more independence in actual life than their theories allow. She owns the garden, and her husband is dependent upon her for his food. If she runs away she leaves him much the poorer ; at least there is always a risk that he will not recover either her or the dowry. And, then, he is mortally afraid of her tongue, her chief resource ; and well he may be ; for in an outburst of passion it is the tongue of a fiend, and scorches like hell fire. Frequent storms of unrestrained passion give to the face of the woman of middle age a permanent expression of weakness and dissipation. She is the victim of so much oppression and cruel wrong that one would like to depict her as innocent ; for it is human nature to attribute virtue to those who suffer. But it must be confessed that the African woman is at least as degraded as the man. He is more cruel ; but she is more licentious.

It is exceedingly difficult to learn the attitude of the African woman towards polygamy. Still, I believe it is contrary to her natural instinct. I have known instances

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of heathen women cursing Christian husbands because they would not marry other wives, and it happens—though infrequently—that women leave their husbands for this reason. But in all such cases I believe that the woman acts upon the impulse of some lower motive and at the expense of her better self. In civilized lands are there not those who marry for wealth or social position, even without love? In Africa, wealth and social position are represented by a plurality of wives. The wife of a monogamist is a “nobody,” and, besides, has an unusual amount of work to do. But I believe that the majority of women in Africa have in them enough of the true woman to hate polygamy. Their fables and folk-lore are full of this hatred.

Certain phases of polygamy one cannot discuss frankly. Children are not weaned until the age of two or three years. During this period of lactation the husband and wife observe absolute continence in regard to each other. But he has other wives and this continence imposes no restraint upon him. And to the woman it is a source of so much unhappiness and jealousy that she frequently refuses to bear children, and resorts to abortion. This practice of abortion, and its relation to polygamy, is curiously overlooked by those who advocate polygamy for Africa. It is doubtless more common in some tribes than in others.

But while polygamy is obnoxious to the woman's instinct, it is impressed upon her that the instinct is selfish and ought to be suppressed, and that it is right to be willing to share her husband with other wives. It is just at this point that the teaching of Christianity makes so strong an appeal to the African woman; and her response is whole-hearted. It truly “finds” her. I know women in Gaboon who have suffered inexpressible humiliation and grief when their husbands took other

wives, and who immediately separated from them and lived their remaining years in widowhood.

The Orungu tribe, immediately south of Gaboon, from whom I often obtained workmen, have a peculiarly large body of stories and legends, which form a kind of commentary on all their customs. The following is an example :

Once upon a time there was a very great king, Ra-Nyambia, who had many sons and daughters, and whose servant was Wind. Now, one of this king's daughters, Ogula, had an *ngalo*. The *ngalo* is a very powerful fetich. Some favoured persons are born with it. It is never acquired by others. Ogula, when she became a "whole" woman, declared that she was not willing to have a husband who would have other wives, but must have one who would be all her own. She waited a long time, but found no man who was fit to be her husband. Then she consulted her *ngalo*, who told her what to do. One day shortly after this, when her father's people were going hunting, she said to them : "Find for me a wild goat, and do not kill it, but bring it to me alive."

So the hunters brought her a wild goat ; and when Ogula saw it she said : "It is well."

She then requested one of the hunters to kill the wild goat and skin it most carefully. She also requested another hunter to fill her canoe with water. The skin she burned in the fire till all that was left was ashes, and the ashes she carefully wrapped in plantain-leaves and put away in a safe place. Then she commanded that the entire body of the wild goat should be placed in the canoe, which was full of water. There she left it for three days. On the third day, standing beside the canoe, she addressed her *ngalo* and said : "Oh, *ngalo* mine, turn this goat into a handsome and stylish man."

Immediately there leaped out of the canoe a very handsome and stylish man.

Then Ogula sent her servants to her father, Ra-Nyambia, and bade them say to him that she had procured a husband and that she was coming to present him to her father. Ra-Nyambia made ready to receive them properly. He called his servant, Wind, and told him to clean up the street; whereupon Wind got busy and swept the street clean. And Ra-Nyambia put on his best ornaments. Soon Ogula appeared with her new husband walking by her side, while all the people followed in astonishment and admiration, saying to one another: "Where did Ogula get this handsome and stylish husband?"

Ra-Nyambia was greatly pleased; and Ogula and her husband returned to her house. But everywhere, through all the towns, there went out a report of Ogula's handsome and stylish husband.

Now there lived in a town not far away a beautiful woman, named Ogondaga, the daughter of a king; and Ogondaga had no husband. At length Ogondaga said: "I am tired of hearing of Ogula's handsome and stylish husband. This day I shall go and see him for myself."

She ordered her father's servants to take her in a canoe to Ogula's town, saying also to her father that she would return that same day. This, however, she did not intend to do; for she had determined to win the love of Ogula's husband. Ogula received Ogondaga very kindly, and when her husband returned from the forest she said to him: "This is my friend Ogondaga."

In the evening Ogondaga's servants came and said to her: "It is time to go home."

But she replied: "You must go without me; for I am going to visit my friend Ogula."

Then they asked her when they should return for her, and she said: "You need not come for me at all. I shall go home when I please."

Ogula treated Ogondaga very kindly, and gave her plenty to eat and a good bed. The next day Ogula's husband said to her: "I love Ogondaga; you must speak to her for me. Will you do so?"

And Ogula, though her heart was sore, said: "I shall speak to her."

This she did; and her husband went with Ogondaga and neglected her. The next day they had work to do together and she called him; but he was angry. And so it was the next day, and the next.

Now this continued for four days; whereupon Ogula, taking some of the ashes of the goatskin, which she had so carefully kept, came upon her husband while he was washing, and suddenly rubbed the ashes upon his feet. Instantly his feet were changed to hoofs. He stamped upon the ground and cried out: "What is this? What is this?"

His wife replied: "It is nothing at all. Why don't you go out on the street?"

Then he pleaded with Ogula until she relented and by the power of her ngalo changed his hoofs again into feet. But again he abandoned her.

Then Ogula, taking all the ashes of the goatskin, and watching her opportunity, while he was washing threw the ashes over her husband's body, saying: "Go back where you came from."

Immediately her handsome and stylish husband was changed into a wild goat and began leaping around the room. Ogula opened the door, outside of which Ogondaga was sitting, and the goat sprang through the door into the street and scampered off into the forest, while all the people laughed and shouted, saying one to another: "So, Ogula's handsome and stylish husband was only the wild goat which Ra-Nyambia's people caught in the forest."

But Ogula turned to Ogondaga and said : "Do you see your man ? Call him to you. He always comes when you call."

Then Ogula called Ogondaga's people to her town. She also told her father, Ra-Nyambia, to prepare for a big palaver. So Ra-Nyambia called Wind and told him to sweep the town clean. When Ogondaga's people came Ogula brought them before Ra-Nyambia, together with all Ra-Nyambia's own people. Then Ogula told the whole story : How she had got a handsome and stylish husband for herself ; how Ogondaga came ; how kindly she had received her ; how she was even willing that Ogondaga should share her husband's heart ; and how Ogondaga had taken, not a part, but his whole heart.

Finally she said to her visitors : "You may go back now to your town ; but Ogondaga is not going with you. She must stay here and be my slave as long as she lives."

And Ra-Nyambia and all the people said that the judgment was just. So Ogondaga became Ogula's slave. And that's the end of the story.

The African woman is not cynical enough to mean that the difference between a man and a goat is chiefly a matter of the skin. But the wild goat of the story reminds one inevitably of the ancient *satyr*, which was half man and half goat ; which men also imitated in pagan festivals, covering themselves with goatskins, and singing and dancing. Hence the origin of the word *tragedy*, which means a *goatsong*, and which came to us by way of the Greek drama, which was developed from those early religious festivals.

The Fang have a variety of amusements to which they are devoted. They have many games. A few of these are always associated with gambling. But their chief and constant amusements are music, dancing and storytelling. Of music I have already said enough.

The tom-tom supplies the rhythm for dancing, but the melodies are vocal. The songs are solos with responsive chants sung in chorus. They dance with the whole body, setting in motion the limbs, head, shoulders, thighs and stomach. In many of their dances they simulate love-making or hunting, and the various animals they pursue. Sometimes the movements of the dance are very obscene. Among the women there are professional dancers; and these are nearly always women of low reputation. Men and women sometimes—not often—dance simultaneously, but never in couples, nor is there any physical contact between them. There are solitary dancers, men and women, who dance themselves into a frenzy, leaping into the air or whirling round and round until they fall in a swoon, or a trance, during which, or immediately upon recovering, they name persons who are guilty of witchcraft.

But no person is more popular among the Africans than a good story-teller. There are professional story-tellers whose performances correspond to those of the theatre among civilized people. One of these takes his place in the middle of the street with the whole population of the town sitting on the ground before him.

“Shall we tell a story?” he says.

“A story!” they respond in chorus.

“Then let us away!”

“Away!”

In such a story as that of “Ogula and her Ngalo,” already told in this chapter, the story-teller would occasionally break into song or chanting; whereupon the audience will take up the chant as a refrain and repeat it over and over, until he is ready to proceed with the story.

The African is a born story-teller. And we should expect this from the fact that he is the most sociable man

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in the world. He cannot easily be killed with work ; but isolation will kill him quickly. The old men sit in the palaver-house all their spare time (that is, all the time between naps and meals) entertaining and amazing the younger generation with the narration of their past exploits—how many women have gladly eloped with them, how many others they have captured, how many enemies they have killed in war, and how they have fought wild animals with unheard-of bravery. The conversation is often a lying-match. But they turn out interesting tales.

An old man—a famous hunter in former days, according to his own story—tells at great length of a fierce fight between a leopard and a gorilla which he witnessed ; and having at last exhausted his resources of invention, but utterly unwilling that the story should end in an anticlimax, he tells how the gorilla, watching an opportunity, suddenly seized the leopard's tail and swung him around his head so swiftly that the leopard was hurled into space leaving his tail in the gorilla's hand. Observing the look of incredulity in the faces of his audience, he gravely adds :

“ And this I saw with my own eyes. And when both the leopard and the gorilla had gone I picked up the tail and brought it home to my town, thinking that I would use it to keep the flies off my back. Many people of the town saw this tail ; but all those who saw it are dead. For, you see, it was a human leopard (a leopard that was formerly a man) and it haunted the town so long as the tail was there, and inflicted a plague upon the people, so that every one who saw the tail died. And at length, for the sake of the town and the health of the people, I carried the tail to the forest and left it where the leopard would find it.

“ And that's the end of the story.”

## IX

### FUNERAL CUSTOMS

**A**KBU workman died at an English trading-house, it is said—or was supposed to have died—and his uncoffined form was being borne to the grave upon an open bier by his fellow workmen, when he suddenly embarrassed the funeral cortège by addressing the bearers and demanding that he be instantly informed of what they were intending to do—and why.

The affrighted bearers hastily dropped their load and set out for the interior of Africa. Encountering a body of water on the way they plunged into it and submerged themselves as long as nature would allow, in order to effect a disconnection with talking spirits—which are supposed to have an aversion to water—and their fear being thus quenched, they returned. The corpse meanwhile got off the bier and went home.

Premature burials are common enough in Africa, for reasons which I shall mention later. But the African might offer an easier explanation and say that the Kruman was really dead and came to life again. For the African lives in a world of confusion and disorder, where there is scarcely any such thing as a "course of nature"; but, rather, a succession of unrelated wonders. Elsewhere every effect has a cause; but Africa is run by magic, and things happen without a cause. Elsewhere, as some sage has remarked, every beginning has an *end*—implying that the end bears a logical relation to the beginning and may even be foreseen; but in Africa a beginning is just a beginning, and affords no clue to the end—

if there should be any end. One goes to a wedding, and it turns out that the groom is a leopard in the form of a man, who in the midst of the ceremony carries off the bride. One goes to a funeral and the corpse sits up and talks or breaks loose and runs away. This is the atmosphere in which the African lives.

Among the semi-civilized Mpongwe of Gaboon, when sickness seems likely to prove fatal, the friends and relations from far and near gather into the house of the sick, as many as can crowd inside, and sit about on the floor, quietly expectorating, or smoking and expectorating, but always expectorating. The effect of sympathy upon the salivary glands has not been duly considered by physiologists. There is more than one reason for their hastening to the bedside of the sick. It is, of course, expected as an expression of sympathy ; and if the sick one should recover he will resent the omission of this customary courtesy. But if he should die there are sure to be charges of witchcraft, and suspicion is likely to fall first on any who did not come to sympathize, the supposition being that they were kept away by a sense of guilt.

The low wail of mourning starts as soon as it appears that the sick one is dying, although he may still be conscious. Then when the death is announced there is a great outburst of cries and shrieks, accompanied by frantic actions of grief and protest. But this wild outburst soon subsides into the regular wail of the mourning dirge.

The mother is always the chief mourner. However formal the mourning of others, hers is a poignant anguish that rends the hearer's heart. As she chants she breaks forth into a rhapsody in which she recites the story of her loved one's life, dwelling upon those incidents the memory of which only a mother cherishes. She sings because she must. No other expression would be adequate ; and cer-

tainly no other would be so affecting to the hearer. One reflects that the strongest emotions naturally resort to music for their expression, and that singing is as natural as laughter or tears ; and one understands how that ancient orators—accounted the world's greatest—chanted, or intoned their orations without lessening, but rather deepening the impression of sincerity and passionate conviction.

The mourning continues without interruption until the burial, except while the coffin is being made—for the Mpongwe use coffins. The coffin is made in the street, in front of the house. If there should be any wailing at that time the departed spirit will not like his new house, and some of those who helped to make it will surely die before the year is over. I have seen a man, who heard the least sound of a wail while he was working on the coffin, fling his hammer on the ground in great anger and refuse to continue the work. The mourning is also suspended during the digging of the grave, if it is near by. The making of the grave must not be interrupted, but continued until it is finished. Upon its completion a stick or other object is thrown into it to keep other spirits from taking possession before its proper resident comes to occupy it.

The corpse, having been prepared for burial by being dressed in its best robe, is laid upon the floor, the mother or nearest relation taking the head upon her lap and leading in the mourning. But, before this, all the relations put on their oldest rags and as few of them as decency will allow. The most civilized among them, unwilling to disrobe, often turn their dresses inside out. Owing to the peculiar climate bodies are not usually kept long. The funeral sometimes takes place within twelve or even eight hours after death.

From the stories of natives one must conclude that premature burial is far from uncommon. The short in-

terval which custom allows between death and burial is a partial explanation. And it may also be accounted for among many tribes by the frequency of religious trance, mistaken for death. The trance is usually self-induced, for the purpose of reading the future, or when they commune with the spirit of the moon ; but the practice would probably make them subject to involuntary trance. They have abundant opportunity of proving the fact of premature burial, since they so frequently exhume the bodies of the dead ; sometimes they find the body in an altered position. There are various reasons for exhuming the bodies of the dead. Sometimes the spirit of the departed is dissatisfied with the grave and becomes troublesome to the living, subjecting them to annoyance and injury until the body is placed in another grave. If the departed was a person of small importance the people may resent these posthumous activities and seek to disable the spirit by exhuming the body and throwing it into the sea, after cutting off the head. Among the interior tribes the body is frequently exhumed in order to obtain the brains or the skull for fetish purposes. Thus the evidences are found of premature burial.

But, besides the haste with which they bury their dead, and the frequency of the trance, there is still another explanation of premature burial. They are disposed to regard a person as dead as soon as he becomes unconscious, although the heart may still be perceptibly beating. They cannot dissociate the personal spirit from seeing, hearing and feeling. They will therefore say of the unconscious one that he, the person, is gone, and that only the life of the body is left ; and they will lose no time in preparing for the funeral.

The spirit of the deceased knows all that is going on and is supposed to be very sensitive in regard to the amount of mourning and the details of the funeral.

Among the Fang, the wives of a man who has died, when they are not put to death, are often beaten severely to augment their sorrow, and they are compelled to go entirely naked for a length of time—sometimes a whole year. No one must speak to them, nor give them food.

It is especially respectful to the dead to manifest reluctance in burying the body. And to act unreasonably at such a time, or to seem a little foolish, is very pleasing to the departed. The bearers usually belong half to the father's family and half to the family of the mother. The coffin is of plain boards covered with blue cotton. There are no handles: the bearers carry it on their heads. The practice in former times, but not so common now, was for some of the bearers on the way to the grave to refuse to go further, as if unwilling to bury the body of their friend and relation. The others would insist upon burial, and a strange altercation would take place, with some pushing, the bearers halting and starting, and halting again, but at last yielding to necessity and mastering their feelings.

A short time before I left Gaboon there was a peculiar revival of this custom. A woman had died who was a member of the church. According to our custom, they were allowed to bury her in the mission cemetery. The cemetery is on the back part of the premises and it is necessary to pass through the front yard to reach it. The family of this particular woman were all heathen, and I presume they had been drinking; for rum is now regarded as a necessity at an Mpongwe funeral, except among the Christians. During the procession of the funeral, as they were entering the cemetery, some of the bearers objected to going further, and began to push the other bearers back, according to the good old custom. But in this instance custom was outdone. The two parental families to whom the bearers belonged had not

been friendly. The pushing of some was resented by the others, and soon each party, under the guise of conventionality and revered custom, delivered real blows upon the other and paid off some old scores. In the ensuing fight the coffin was precipitated to the ground. Leaving it where it fell, the whole funeral procession started for the police court. And experience with French justice having taught them that much depends upon getting there first, each party tried to outrun the other. Some of the mourners, however, fearing trouble with the officials if the body were not buried immediately, dissuaded them from their purpose before they reached the court, and they all came back together and buried the body.

The coast tribes have regular burying places. But most interior tribes bury in the street, or in the garden, and sometimes even beneath the earthen floor of the house. A prominent man in Batanga, whom I knew, buried his favourite wife under his door-step. In such burials probably something more is sought than merely to honour the dead. They may also intend to procure health and protection for the household. This idea is borne out by the customs of certain far-interior tribes, among whom when a great chief would build a house he first kills a number of slaves and buries them beneath the foundation.

Among the Fang, back from the coast, who have not been influenced by contact with the white man, all the funeral customs are more rude and barbarous, and often revolting. The dead are buried without coffins, usually in a sitting posture, and in very shallow graves. Some of the tribes adjacent to the Fang on the south do not bury at all. They have regular cemeteries in which they leave the bodies above the ground and cover them with palm branches or woven mats. In most tribes offerings

of food and drink are placed beside the grave. As the drink evaporates and the food wastes they say the spirit is consuming it. Fire-wood is left on the grave that the body may be kept warm. In the case of those accused of witchcraft they often seek to disable the spirit by burning the body. For the spirits of the dead still retain some connection with the body. For this same reason when slaves die, or others whom they have especial reason to fear, they sometimes beat the body with heavy clubs until they break every bone and reduce it to a shapeless mass.

Wives charged with witchcraft are usually buried alive with the dead body of the husband. In one instance, in a certain town that I knew well, a very large grave was dug in the middle of the street, and the body of the man—a chief—was placed in the middle of it. Then his seven wives, charged with having bewitched him, were brought forward, and they were about to break their legs and throw them into the grave, when the timely arrival of the missionary prevented the deed and saved the women's lives. He interposed no physical force; but, knowing his feelings, they were not willing to commit such an atrocity in his presence.

The human shrinking from the dead with them takes the form of fear that the dead will harm them, even their own nearest relations. No matter how they may have loved one while he was alive, yet they will not desire that his spirit should linger; but rather in their mourning they often entreat the dead one to depart. It is heart-rending to hear a mother in the midst of her grief entreat her child to stay far from her and not to touch her. They resort to various expedients to get rid of the spirits of the dead. Sometimes, upon the announcement of a death, while the women indulge in frantic shrieks, or the mourning wail, the men beat drums or fire off their guns

to frighten the spirit away. Nevertheless, the spirit remains in the house as long as the body is there and accompanies it to the grave. Therefore the bed that the deceased lay upon is occupied continually between death and burial to the supposed discomfort of the spirit. After the burial they hurry home, sometimes running, in order to escape from the spirit, which may not be able to find its way back to the town alone. On the way home it is advisable, if possible, to plunge into water. If one should fall while thus running he will die within a year. Sickness and other troubles are often attributed to the spirits of those who have recently died. Little children whose mothers have died often die themselves soon after ; it is because the dead mother cannot resist the temptation to embrace them.

Among the Mpongwe blue is worn as mourning. The men also shave their heads. The mourning chant is continued at night, usually for a month after the funeral. Near relations remain as visitors in the town during the period of mourning. The usual activities are suspended and children are neglected. The white man's rum is now regarded as a necessary factor in relieving hearts surcharged with sorrow. As time passes gossip becomes incessant and engenders estrangements and hatreds. There are also criminal intimacies. Indeed, a period of mourning is perhaps the most demoralizing experience through which a community can pass.

With most of the mourners the mourning wail itself is purely conventional, serving only for the assumption of a sham grief rather than the relief of a real one. But no one forgets the possible charges of witchcraft ; and to avert suspicion it is wise to be prompt and eager in the mourning, especially on the part of those who were known to be estranged from the deceased. A certain Mpongwe woman, entering a house of mourning where a friend had

just died, asked the husband of the deceased to excuse her from mourning because she had a sore ear and it hurt her to mourn.

Grief, however, is often very deep and real among the Africans; and it can never in any land be measured by conventionalities. The grief of parents for the loss of children is, as I have said, the most poignant grief of the African heart. Again and again, when I have asked a father or mother to explain to the session of the church their long absence from its services, they have confessed in tears that they had been unable to believe in the Christian's God since He had taken away their little child—sometimes an only child—and had left the parent heart cold and joyless.

One day, walking across the lonely *grass-field* of Gaboon, the stillness broken only by the rustle of the long grass around me and the distant boom of the sea beyond the horizon, I met a man of Gaboon who was returning home after a trading expedition into the forest. He was a shrewd man who had traded successfully both with white and black and who seemed to care for nothing else but trade, a man of materialistic mind and peculiarly inaccessible to any spiritual message. We sat down and talked for some time, first of course about trade; but gradually the conversation became more intimate and he talked about himself, at length revealing a great sorrow that years ago had darkened his life and left it dark, like the setting of the sun. He had lost in succession three little children—all he had. He tried to tell me about it, but he had not accustomed himself to speaking of it, and the story ended half-way in a flood of tears. I told him that little story that every minister tells more than once in the course of his ministry—the story of the kind shepherd, and the willful mother sheep that would not cross the stream to the good pasture and the safe fold on the

other side ; and how the shepherd took the lamb in his arms and carried it across, and how the mother sheep stood a while and looked after it with longing and then followed her lamb to the other side. It was a familiar incident to him—some such thing he had done himself—and the simple story moved him deeply. I never saw him again ; for I left Africa shortly afterwards. But I have not forgotten the human tenderness that was revealed beneath the surface hardness of the man's heathen heart ; and I hope that if he be still alive he may not have forgotten the vision of the "sweet fields beyond the swelling floods," and the message of God's love and kindness which he heard that day, like a still, small voice sounding across the storms that had wrecked his life.

The tribes north of the Calabar River—the real Negro tribes—are more cruel in all their customs than the tribes further south. Even apart from any accusation of witchcraft, when a man dies a number of persons are frequently put to death to accompany his spirit to the other world. When a great chief dies wives and slaves are killed that the chief may enter the spirit world as a person of consequence. For it is supposed that slaves sent with him will still be his slaves and wives will still be wives. I have known an instance of a native dying on shipboard, and when the body was cast into the sea, the female relations actually tried to leap after it in order to accompany the spirit of the deceased to the other world.

Among some of the tribes of the Niger it was the custom (until the English government suppressed it) that when a chief died a number of persons, perhaps twelve or more, usually women and slaves, were buried alive with him, and without any accusation against them. An enormous grave was dug ; and all these persons were lowered into it together with the dead body of the chief. Then the grave was covered over with a roof, a small open-

ing being left, upon which a stone was placed. Each day the stone was removed and the question was asked of those below whether they had yet followed the chief—each day until at last no voice replied. Among the Fang I have not known of any such practice. The only persons put to death on such occasions are those who have been charged with witchcraft. But multitudes die daily on this charge.

My first contact with death in Africa was among the Bulu, at a little town called Mon Nlam (if I remember correctly) close to Efulen. One afternoon when I was alone at Efulen I was startled by the firing of guns in the little village at the foot of our hill. There were cries also and shrieks such as I had never before heard. Several of the many natives around me belonged to Mon Nlam; and these started for home as fast as they could run. I caught something of their alarm and ran after them to the town. Following the lead of the natives I ran through the town into the banana garden immediately beyond, where all the people were gathered. There in the midst were a number of women (I forget how many) shrieking frantically and throwing themselves madly upon the ground. They were entirely naked and their bodies were smeared with white clay, even their faces and their hair. Other women were vainly trying to restrain them, while the crowd looked on.

Such a scene was quite new to me in those days, and the horror of it I have never forgotten. I had only the slightest knowledge of the language and it took me some time to find out what had happened. Several men, the husbands of these women, had gone hunting in the forest. Two other towns near by were at war with each other; but this town had nothing whatever to do with the war. A number of men from one of the two towns were hiding in the forest, lying in wait for the enemy,

when they espied these men who were hunting. In the dim light of the forest they mistook their friends for their enemies and fired upon them. An African would rather kill ten friends than let one enemy escape. They killed all the men of the hunting-party. This was the news that had just reached the town. It was the more pitiable because the town was small, and the loss of several of its strongest men seriously weakened its defense.

There were the usual charges of witchcraft against the women; and when I in amazement pointed out to them that in this instance there was no mystery whatever; that those men, as they knew, had been killed by the bullets of those who had fired upon them, they replied that while this was doubtless true it was only half the truth; for those men wore protecting charms that would have made it impossible for bullets to injure them, and that the spell of witchcraft must have destroyed the power of the charms. I only convinced them that while I knew considerable about bullets I knew nothing about witchcraft and nothing about wives. The doubt, however, which had been thus suggested, was sufficient to enable us to protect the women from any fatal violence; although the restraints and sufferings imposed upon widows during their period of mourning is almost intolerable.

In contrast with that scene, where the elemental passions of fear, grief and rage fairly made demons of men and women, I think of another death that was not in any way horrible or revolting; it was the death of a Fang chief named *Ndong*, one of the first of the Fang Christians. *Ndong* and his people had come recently from the far interior and had settled on one of the branches of the Gaboon. He had lived all his life among such death scenes as I have just described, and himself had taken a leading part in punishing witchcraft. When I first knew

him he had more fetishes than any man in his town ; for he was in ill health and of course supposed that somebody was bewitching him. The fetishes were an attempt to protect himself ; but they were a failure, and he was in terror of everybody around him. After several conversations with him he boldly renounced fetishism and threw away all his fetishes. He told the people that if God desired that he should live He would defend and protect him ; and that if God was calling him he was ready to go. He lived six months to proclaim this new faith, and then died, having been sorely tried by constant suffering. I reached the town just as he died. There was not a fetish in his house. But it was more surprising that there was no heathen mourning. The town was strangely quiet when I arrived. An elderly woman said to me :

“Ndong has died. He died as one goes to sleep, without fear, and without blaming anybody. We never saw a death like this before. A new day is dawning.”

## X

### THE DOROTHY

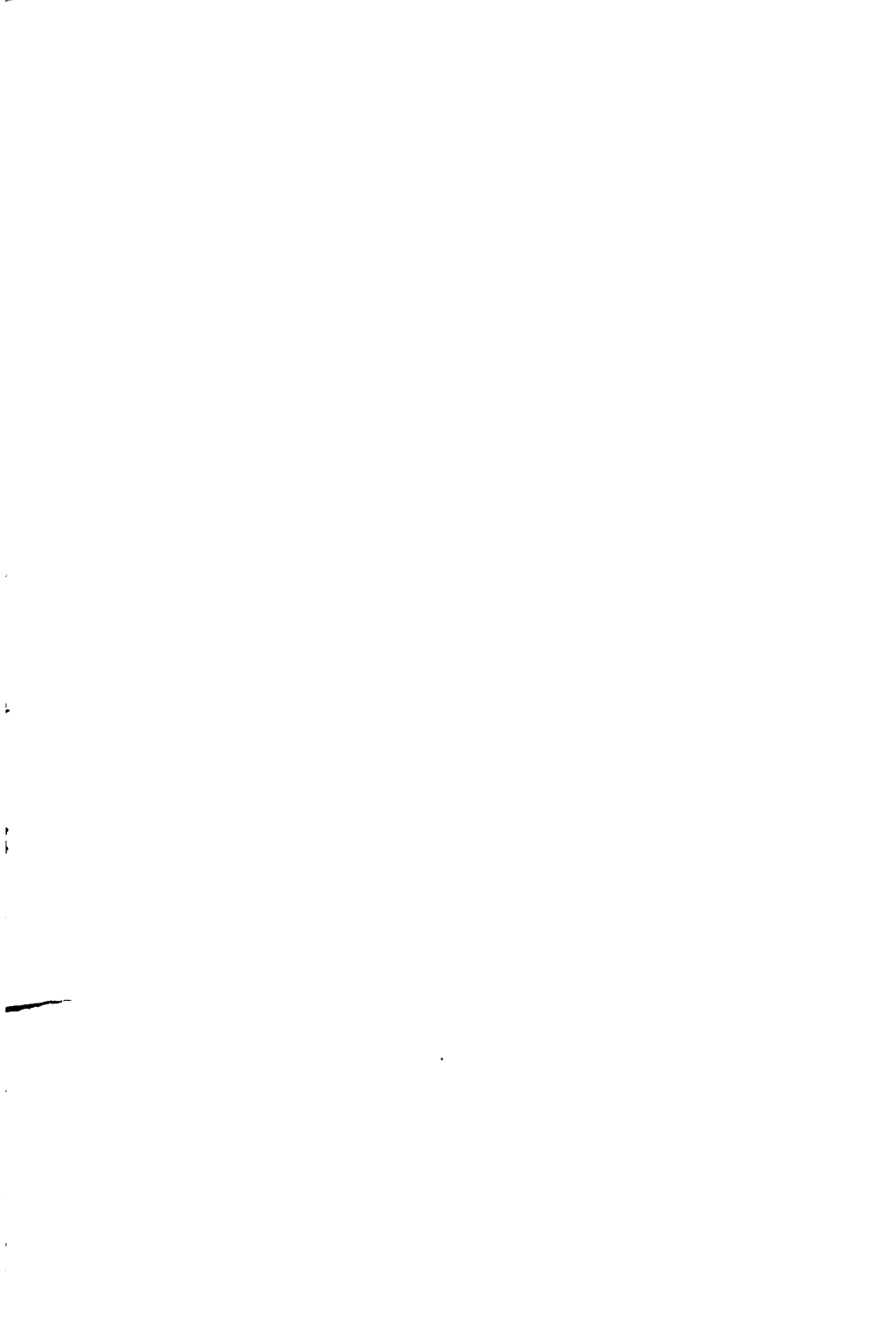
**I**N response to my urgent appeal, a gasoline launch, the *Dorothy*, was given for the work on the Gaboon River, by a friend of missions living in Orange, New Jersey. The gift was a memorial to a little daughter, *Dorothy*, who had died.

The arrival of the *Dorothy* was the most joyful event of all my years in Africa. Hitherto I had reached the Fang only by canoe or small sailboat, the latter depending upon oars more than sails. The area of the work was therefore circumscribed and the incidental exposure dreadful. But now we no longer regarded the heat by day nor the rains by night; for there was a large cabin provided with every comfort, including good beds. And this latter was a main consideration. After the arrival of the *Dorothy* I seldom stayed in a town over night nor slept in a native bed—a few straight poles laid side by side, sometimes with the additional luxury of a grass mat. Besides a bed of poles, I escaped stifling heat, infinite noise, rats, roaches, lizards, scorpions, centipedes, ants, fleas, lice and a staggering combination of odours. In the lower rivers that flow through the mangrove swamps I also escaped the vile atmosphere and the mosquitoes by running out to the bay at night. Added to these considerations, its speed was such that I could travel against wind and tide; and by means of it the former work was multiplied many times, and spread over the whole area of the Gaboon basin.

The *Dorothy* was a house-launch, and was intended only



*THE DOROTHY.*



for the rivers. The walls of the cabin presented such an area to the wind that on the bay or at sea, unless in the calmest weather, it rolled as nothing else ever rolled ; and in a storm it was dangerous.

Ndong Koni, who had been long in my service, was captain of the *Dorothy* ; the rest of the crew I had to choose with greater care than in former days, and it was difficult to find men who were qualified both by intelligence and trustworthiness. I discharged one man for disobedience in smoking a pipe over an open tank from which they were drawing gasoline.

On one occasion when I was preparing for a long trip up the river, Ndong Koni was absent ; and not having time myself to look after every detail of the preparation, I entrusted to one of the crew, a boy named *Toko*, the work of filling the tank with gasoline. *Toko* was not a Fang, but a coastman. He was so black that he seemed to radiate darkness and create a kind of twilight in his neighbourhood. The Fang were like mulattoes beside him. He had worked some time for an English trader and had picked up a smattering of very original English. On this occasion *Toko* assured me that he "done fill the tank proper full." But on the return trip the engine suddenly stopped one morning at daylight : the gasoline was exhausted. We were thirty miles from home : and it was the rough bay, not the river, that stretched between. There was only one thing to do ; and in a few minutes we had anchored the *Dorothy*, and had started for Gaboon in a canoe, our purpose being to get the gasoline we required and return immediately.

The canoe was large and there were plenty of paddles, so I took with me every man on board except *Toko*, whom I left in charge of the *Dorothy*, to spend what I supposed would be the longest and most miserable day of his life. For I knew that we would not be back before

midnight ; and although the bay was now like glass the sea-breeze would rise about ten o'clock and increase all day long. The *Dorothy* was anchored in a very bad place and it was enough to make one sick in anticipation. But it was necessary that some one should remain in charge, and I was so indignant at Toko for his neglect that I had no compunction of conscience, but inwardly gloated like a cannibal over a feast. We are all cannibals by instinct when it comes to eating our enemies.

The sea-breeze later in the day became almost a gale, and was directly against us ; the waves were soon crested with whitecaps and grew bigger and bigger. It took the combined strength of six men with paddles to make any headway in the last several hours. I felt quite safe, for Ndong Koni whom we had picked up along the way was steersman. The skill of the natives in canoeing—their instinctive balancing, their knowledge of the waves, and the proper way to receive each wave is marvellous ; for of a hundred waves no two may be alike. The degree of tendency to careen at the stroke of each wave, or (if the sea is abeam) as the peak of the wave passes under the canoe, must be met by a dexterous stroke of the paddle of the steersman, or the counterpoise of the body. It is very exhilarating. Mind and muscle must act instantly. No sooner is one wave passed than the mind, dismissing it, leaps to the next encounter. One finds himself personifying the waves and regarding them as personal enemies whom he must fight or die. But our canoe was large, and strength as much as skill kept us from being swamped.

We reached Gaboon late in the afternoon and having procured gasoline and rigged our largest sailboat, the *Lafayette*, we immediately started back to the *Dorothy*. It was a wild night and very dark ; but the wind was favourable, and there was not on all the coast of West

Africa a better sailing boat of its size than the *Lafayette*. Many a night I have sailed in her on the open sea, to Corisco and Benito, sometimes when the night was pitch dark and the wind howling. Such a situation is far from conducive to sleep. But I had great confidence in the *Lafayette*. She combined speed and daring with amiability and was a boat to admire and love.

But we are now on our way back to the *Dorothy* and to the rescue of poor Toko. We reached the *Dorothy* at midnight. Long before this I had relented towards Toko. Indeed, soon after the sea-breeze arose in the morning, and I knew the *Dorothy* was rolling in the trough of the sea, I was disappointed to find that I was not really enjoying his discomfiture as much as I had anticipated. As the wind blew harder I experienced an emotional reaction, and I felt more and more sorry for him. When night came on the loneliness of his situation, far from land, on a rough sea, added another appealing element, and it would have been the easiest thing in the world to have obtained a promise from me to raise his wages if we should succeed in rescuing him from his miserable plight. Many hours before we reached him we saw the dim solitary light, indicating that the *Dorothy* was at least afloat. Then we could see the light swaying from side to side with the rolling and plunging of the vessel. On we sped, while the light seemed far away as ever; then, all at once, it flashed with sudden nearness, and in a few minutes we were at the gangway.

I called to Toko as we approached, but received no answer. Even as we came alongside there was no response to our united call. I sprang on board and rushed into the cabin only to stumble over some unwonted obstacle that nearly pitched me on my head. The obstacle was the living body of Toko, who to my question replied: "Mastah, I done pass fine day. I been sleep all time.

All this day and all this night I no wake, only for eat and for make them head-light."

I muttered in reply: "You incorrigible rascal! You ought to have been sick. You know you ought."

Several times I ascended the upper Gaboon, called the *Como*, further than any launch had ever gone, to a town thirty miles above Angom, and one hundred miles from the sea. The *Como* on its way to the sea cuts through the Sierra del Crystal Mountains. The course of the river through the mountains is tortuous and through deep gorges. The current is exceedingly swift; and the channel, which is deep but narrow, is filled with projecting rocks and hidden snags. The water pours through these gorges in a succession of rapids, or waltzes down in whirling eddies, or, again, coils and twists like an angry serpent. In contrast to the repulsive and evil-smelling mangrove swamps of the lower river, the scenery of the upper river is magnificent and exquisitely beautiful. The hills part before us as if by magic; while with each short curve the scene is changed. The high banks, from the tops of the trees even to the water, are draped with a veil of delicate vines, covered with flowers of white and lavender, and festooned upon the banks with long, drooping ferns, all swinging in the wind. A picturesque native town, perched upon a high summit, is named *Home of the Moon*.

Navigation through this channel is difficult and dangerous. Ndong Koni had charge of the wheel, and no white man could have surpassed him. A momentary glance at the surface of the water was sufficient to tell him what was beneath. He knew exactly the allowance to make for the strength of a whirlpool, or the force of the current in a short curve. An error of judgment, or a moment's hesitation, in some places might have been our destruction.

The first time I ascended this dangerous part of the river I engaged a pilot from one of the oldest towns ; a man who had known the river all his life, who had seen it frequently at the lowest, and was therefore familiar with the channel ; for the native does not forget a channel, but has a peculiarly tenacious memory for each snag and boulder that has occasionally been exposed to view. This pilot was picturesque, being dressed in a nondescript felt hat and scarcely anything else. We haggled for some time over the price of his services, but at last he agreed to come for a bar of soap and a dose of salts.

As we ascended the river Ndong Koni stood at the wheel, in the bow, while the pilot stood immediately behind him, indicating with outstretched arms the channel and the dangers on either side. I stood bending over the engine, with one hand on the lever and the other on the throttle, in an attitude of strained attention. Several times we touched hidden snags that sent a shiver through the launch and strangely affected my own vertebræ ; and once or twice we struck with such force as to disconnect the propeller. Suddenly the pilot began to "take on" like a maniac, yelling and calling to his ancestors, throwing his precious hat and pursuing it from one end of the cabin to the other, as if his mind had given way under the weight of responsibility. I left the engine long enough to rush forward, seize him by the neck and throw him into a corner. Then the truth dawned upon me : he had seen a fly and was trying to kill it. I have already said that this disposition towards the fly is an obsession with the native. In no other matter is he such a fool. But if he were engaged in a life-and-death combat with an enemy a sudden opportunity to kill a fly might prove his undoing.

Upon our return we were sweeping down the river with the speed of a locomotive when I chanced to look out

and found that we were passing Atakama, where we were intending to call. I shouted to the mate to stand by, and added some ungentle words of remonstrance at his stupidity in not observing that we had reached Atakama, where I had told him we were going to stop. I probably overdid the matter of remonstrance, for the mate got excited. He sprang to the anchor, and without a moment's hesitation threw it overboard, while we were still going at nearly full speed with the swift current. The ensuing jar was such that it took me some time to realize that we were still afloat, and I could never afterwards pass the place without emotion.

Further down the river we were enlivened by the presence of several passengers going to the coast to work, or perhaps to visit. Visiting is a passion with the African. It is regulated by custom, which prescribes a limit (though a very generous one) beyond which it is not lawful to extend a visit. More than once I have known of a long-suffering host speeding the departing guest by an appeal to this law. Upon every journey with the *Dorothy* we were besieged with applications for a passage. No tickets were issued, but the fare was always a chicken, regardless of distance or destination. Ndong Konl was purser and looked after the chickens, collecting them before we started and feeding them on the journey. The people would not sell chickens to me, but would give them in pay for passage, since I would not accept anything else. I was therefore glad enough to have a few passengers, as it meant that I ate chicken instead of sardines or Armour's sausage. Toko, who often officiated as cook, was always glad when he could make the announcement: "Mr. Milligan, I go burn a chicken for your chop." When there were no chickens he had to "kill a tin."

The basin of the Gaboon with its network of small

rivers filled by the tide, as I have said, is a contrast to the scenery of the upper river. When the tide is high the foliage of the mangrove lies upon the water and the appearance is not displeasing except for its unapproachable monotony. But when the tide is out these streams are empty or nearly so and the receding water leaves the mangroves standing up six or eight feet out of the water on their mass of vertical roots as if on tiptoe. The dripping roots are usually covered with small oysters. Below this lies the deep, black, slimy mud, sometimes only half seen through the brooding vapour and stretches forth uncanny fingers and creeps from root to root. The ugliness of it is only equalled by the smell. There is nothing more hideous in the world, and I am sure that the Styx itself flows through a mangrove swamp. Sometimes the receding tide left us stranded in this black batter for several hours, and the night consigned us to mosquitoes. But as soon as the rising tide floated us we sped to the bay, leaving mosquitoes and heat and fœtid banks behind us, and blessing the *Dorothy*.

On several occasions I ventured out upon the open sea with the *Dorothy*. Twice I went to Benito, one hundred miles north of Gaboon. On the first of these journeys my old captain, Makuba, was with me instead of Ndong Koni. But Makuba's home was at Benito, and he decided to remain there. I hired an intelligent coast man in his place, one who had had years of experience in sailing-craft and knew the intervening coast perfectly. The sea was so heavy that we kept as close to the shore as we dared, although it was fringed with rocks and reefs. The night we chose for our return was exceedingly dark and the sea rough. The engine was in an obstinate mood and my entire attention was occupied with it.

Suddenly I became conscious that the sea was abeam, instead of on our starboard bow. Leaving the engine, I

ran forward, and looked at the compass. We were going directly towards the shore. I actually heard the sound of the breakers on the reef. My intelligent wheelman, in order to render me the best possible service, had thought to stimulate his mind and muscle with a few swags from a bottle of rum, which he had thoughtfully brought with him. But, owing perhaps to the lurching of the vessel, he swallowed more than he intended, with the result that he was soon comfortably sleeping while the *Dorothy* sped towards destruction. "Be ye angry, and sin not," is the twofold injunction of Scripture. I may as well confess that I concentrated upon the first part of the injunction and clean forgot the second part.

The wind blew harder, and we realized that we were out on a stormy sea with a house-launch. On this occasion a friend, Mr. Northam, was with me. The rough sea made very hard work at the wheel, but the erstwhile pilot lay on the floor in a somnolent drunk. Mr. Northam and I took the wheel alternately an hour at a time, all that night. For a while it was not a matter of making progress but of weathering the gale. We were seventeen hours running fifty miles, from Hanje to Corisco, and when at last, next morning, we reached shelter and dropped anchor, we all three, Mr. Northam, myself and the *Dorothy* were about done out.

On one occasion the *Dorothy*, in the interest of humanity, played the part of a man-of-war. We were out on the bay, at least a mile from the shore, when our attention was attracted by the strange manœuvres of a large number of canoes all equipped with sails. They were far from us, and were between us and the shore. We soon saw that it was a case of piracy. In all, there were six canoes. Five of them were sailing in a wide circle around the other; but the circle became narrower, and still narrower, as they closed in upon their

victim like white-winged birds of prey. The poor canoe in the centre turned first one way, then another, only each time to find its escape cut off by the revolving circle of canoes. Ndong Koni understood every move they made and explained it to me. He begged me to interfere. I consented, and he sprang to the wheel with a shout. It was necessary at first to conceal our intention lest the canoes should escape to the shore. So he took a course towards a point beyond them, going towards the shore, but at such an angle that they supposed we were passing on. Then suddenly he turned towards them and at full speed bore down upon them.

By the time we had reached them they had closed in upon the central canoe and had taken everything that was in it. There were thirty men against five. The five men in the single canoe had been to Gaboon with their garden produce, or perhaps a raft of mahogany logs, for which they had bought several guns, one or two whole bolts of calico, a web of sail-cloth, and a heap of sundry cheap ornaments for their wives, which might have been sold by the pound or bushel. The robbers took all these goods and even took some of the paddles the men were using. I was now at the wheel. I kept the *Dorothy* under way and cut a circle around them, while I ordered them to return all the stolen goods. They resented it as much as if the goods were actually their own and I the plunderer. But while they hesitated I ran against their largest canoe, in which sat the chief, striking it at an angle, near the bow, so as not to break it, but to send a shiver through it that showed them how completely they were at my mercy. They were willing to do anything in the world if I would only agree not to repeat that last manœuvre. They restored all the stolen goods; and since the single canoe was going my way, I took it in tow to the delight of the occupants.

One day, calling at a town seventy miles from the coast, I found it almost torn down and the people in great distress. They had decided, months before, to move the entire town to the coast, and therefore had not planted their gardens that season. A month previous to my visit the people of the town, with all their goods and chattels, including chickens, goats and sheep, and in some cases even the material of their houses, had been loaded in a fleet of canoes of every size—some so small that a single man sitting in one of them found it necessary to straddle it and let his legs hang in the water, and some large enough for a chief and half a dozen wives and twice as many children, besides a few goats, and a few bunches of plantains and bananas. When they were ready to start a messenger arrived telling them that the people of Alum, a large town thirty miles down the river, were lying in wait for them, intending to kill some of them or take them prisoners. These two towns had been friendly of late; but the people down the river, knowing that the up-river people with their families and possessions would be at an extreme disadvantage, knowing also that they could not long delay their journey because of their limited supply of food, bethought them of some old score resulting from a former war, and resolved to lie in wait and take several prisoners in the hope of extorting a ransom. So they kept men watching day and night on the river.

The unfortunate people of the upper town proved their resourcefulness by proposing to me that I should tow the whole town down the river behind the *Dorothy*—and do it at night. I, for some reason, was fascinated with the idea, and it took only twelve chickens to persuade me.

Taking the entire town in tow, I started down the river about nine o'clock at night. Shortly after midnight I realized that we were approaching the enemy be-

cause of the extraordinary silence of those in the canoes, who hitherto had maintained a deafening noise, but now were hushed, having put out their torches, and were lying down flat in their canoes for safety. The enemy was on the watch ; many canoes were on the river. It was pitch dark, not a single light or sign of life visible. The *Dorothy* as she suddenly burst upon their sight with all her lights, and going full speed, must have looked very formidable to people who had never seen anything of the kind, for she had not before passed at night. They may have supposed that a whole battalion of spirits of all kinds and colours were coming against them. The effect was an immediate panic. Calling loudly to each other and to their ancestors they hastened to the bank. It was only after we had passed that they discovered the canoes in tow and suspected that their enemies had outwitted them.

I visited the town soon afterwards for the purpose of laughing at them. And they laughed with me ; laughed as only Africans can laugh.

One morning just at the break of day Toko burst into my bedroom all out of breath and cried : " Oh, Mr. Milligan, *Doroty* done loss ! *Doroty* done loss ! I look him : he live for beach. I fear he never be good no more."

Before he had finished I had jumped out of bed, and in pajamas and bare feet was running to the beach where I discovered the *Dorothy* nearly a mile down the beach, stranded and lying on her side. It was the worst part of the whole beach, full of rocks, a place where no one would think of beaching even a small boat. It was a mystery how she ever got there without breaking to pieces. There had been a violent tornado during the night and her cable had parted. Very fortunately she was first carried out to sea. A calm followed and the sea gradually became very quiet. With the turning tide she

drifted towards the shore. By the time she was near the beach there was neither wind nor wave and she drifted with the current which of course was strongest where it was deepest and unimpeded by rocks. So she wound in and out, where no human pilot could have guided her, until she stranded. Then the tide receded before the wind again arose; else she would have pounded on the beach. When I found her she was high and dry. I could not tell how much damage she had received and wondered whether she would ever float again. It was a day of suspense as well as hard work.

It took until three o'clock in the afternoon to get her straightened up and ready for the incoming tide to float her. I stayed there all day, having sent a boy to the house to fetch my breakfast and a pair of trousers. When the tide was low we carefully marked the channel; and when she floated we towed her until we were past the last rock and then I sprang to the engine, started her up and she was soon going full speed, nothing the worse for her visit ashore and evidently glad to get back to sea.

It was a trying day. I was standing in water most of the time. But the suspense was the hardest of all. It is not easy to imagine all that the launch meant to me. Every part of my work depended upon it. I gathered the schoolboys from many towns, some of them far away, and at the end of term returned them to their homes. I visited regularly the various groups of Christians scattered in widely separated towns, and by means of the launch was preaching in all the towns on the Gaboon and its tributaries. Its loss would have undone my work. And besides, there was a sentimental attachment which I can hardly explain. In that prolonged exile, this commodious, and almost luxurious, launch represented civilization—fine buildings, libraries, music, hotels, porterhouse steak, ice-cream and so forth, besides friends, home and





CREW OF THE DOROTIY.  
At the end of the line, on the left, is Ioko; the tall man at the other end is Ndutuma;  
the small boy is Nkogo.

all that. Well, when the suspense was completely relieved and the *Dorothy* was going at full speed back to her anchorage—but no one could understand who has not been an exile from home and civilization.

At last and before very long, I had the kind of crew I desired. Besides Ndong Koni and Toko, there were three others in the crew of the *Dorothy*, Ndutuma, Ndong Bisia and a small boy, Nkogo.

Nkogo was one of the brightest of my schoolboys. He sang remarkably well and often led the singing in the school. His beautiful voice was a great help to me in holding services in the towns. He was the most energetic boy I have ever known in Africa. The rest of us grew tired once in a while, but Nkogo never. He was steward, and my personal attendant besides. In the intervals of his own work he was always relieving somebody else, Ndong Koni at the wheel, or Toko at the engine, or the cook in the galley.

Often we had to anchor a mile, or even two miles, from a town, because of shallow water, and go the remaining distance in a canoe, perhaps against a strong current. Nkogo was always the first to volunteer for this extra work, except when it was necessary several times in one day, and then it taxed the strength of the men. Nkogo was opposed to letting another canoe pass us, even if they had twice our number of paddles. He thought it was not loyal to the white man. At such times he would still be racing when all his companions had eased up, or until, as he used to say, "the canoe began to get hot." Life always presented its humorous side to Nkogo. It was one of my few entertaining diversions to hear him each night recount, to those who had remained on board the *Dorothy*, the incidents of our visits in the towns and all that we had seen and heard, while his audience laughed. I myself had usually seen the sickness, the

suffering, the ignorance, the cruelty and all that saddens the heart. But the real truth of African life required that my account should be supplemented by Nkogo's observations.

Ndutuma was the willing horse that was often over-worked. The heavy end always came to him. It was he who cast the anchor and weighed it; which was exceedingly hard work, until, when the *Dorothy* had been in Africa more than a year, we got a small anchor for the river and used the heavy one only in the bay. He also had charge of the canoe which we towed. If, upon reaching a town at the ebb of the tide, an acre of black mud of any or every depth separated us from the town, it was always Ndutuma who carried me on his shoulders. He was a large, homely, coarse-featured man, with a good eye and a gentle voice that was the perfect expression of his kindness and good-nature. And he was a direct product of missionary effort. For he belonged to one of the most savage clans of the Fang. His town was burned several times by the French, and some of the people killed, because of their unprovoked attacks upon their neighbours. Ndutuma was one of Ndong Koni's converts and was a Christian before he ever saw a white missionary. He was at that time about twenty years old.

About two years after his conversion there occurred an event in his life which revealed the quality of his faith. Until that time he was the only Christian in his town and the way was hard for him; but shortly afterwards there were more Christians in that town than in any other. Ndutuma's wife, preferring a more warlike husband, managed to get herself stolen by a man of another tribe. The chief of Ndutuma's town, with some of his allies, made war on the offending tribe; but Ndutuma himself did not join them in the war. The result was strange enough, from the American point of view—a

whole community enraged over an elopement and hotly pursuing the offenders, while the forsaken husband sat quietly at home singing hymns. In Africa the interest of each man belongs to the whole community, including his interest in his wife.

It was not that Ndutuma was glad to be rid of her. For he certainly did want a wife, and any other that he would get would probably be as bad. Moreover he paid a very large dowry for her and had no dowry with which to procure another. It was Christian principle alone that restrained him. He said he would use all peaceable means to get her back, and even if such means failed he would not shed blood. The hard part of it for him was the brand of cowardice and the bitter reviling from his people for enduring such an insult, and for resigning the woman and the goods he had paid for her. It required far more bravery for him to stay at home than to join in the war. But he was firm; and in their hearts they knew he was no coward. They also learned the meaning of Christian faith. They were still more willing to learn the lesson when several of their young men were killed in this very war, notwithstanding the fetishes which they wore for their protection.

Ndutuma never recovered his wife nor the dowry he had paid for her; so he was left a poor man. But most unexpectedly a rich uncle died and left him four wives. This was wealth indeed, and most young men in such luck would have strutted intolerably before their fellows. But Ndutuma coolly announced that he was not a heathen any more; that he would take one of these women for his wife, whichever of them wanted him, and give the others to his poor relations. He was not a noisy man, and that was remarkable in Africa; but he was a man without a price; who was ready at any time to act upon his faith without regard to consequences. He made enemies

among those who were tenacious of heathen customs. Not long after I left Africa he died. His death was wrapped in mystery; and in Africa such mysteries are usually related to poison. I do not know that Ndutuma was a martyr. But he was made of martyr stuff. And many a bloodthirsty man and adulterous woman he led into ways of peace and purity.

Ndong Bisia was one of the most interesting boys that I met in Africa. He was not with me very long, but he was one of those occasional Africans that appeal directly to the affectional side of one's nature. I have said that the Mpongwe tribe have an instinct for good manners, and are the most courteous people in West Africa. But this Fang boy surpassed them all. He first came to me as a schoolboy. When the school closed at the end of the year I took the boys home with the *Dorothy*, and I was obliged to stay two days at Fula where Ndong and several of the boys lived. I had asked the Fula boys to do my cooking on the journey. When we arrived at this town, early in the morning, the boys hastened ashore pell-mell to see their friends—all but Ndong. He remembered that I would need breakfast and he stayed to prepare it.

When he had set everything in order, he said: "Mr. Milligan, I am going to town to see my people but I shall come back and have your dinner ready for you when you return from the town."

He did this for two days. Some few of the other boys would have done the same thing if I had asked them, but Ndong did it without being asked: and it was always so. He was also my best assistant in medical work.

Afterwards he worked on the launch and was with me all the time, often in trying circumstances, but he always presented the same contrast to the ingratitude and selfishness of the heathenism around him.

The two boys, Ndong Bisia and Ndong Koni, are associated with an incident in which they displayed a heroism of devotion that may perhaps enable the reader to understand how it is that a white man can love the people of the jungles.

One day we started on a journey with the *Dorothy* and had gone twenty-five miles, across the bay, when an accident occurred which stopped the engine. The remainder of that day, and a considerable part of the night and all the next day, I tried in vain to make the repair. I then decided to leave the launch and go home in a canoe, returning immediately with the *Lafayette* and crew to tow the *Dorothy* back to Libreville. An approaching fever also warned me not to work any longer at the engine. It chanced that I had only a very small canoe in tow. I was therefore dependent upon being able to procure a larger one from some native who might pass that way; and we were in an out-of-the-way place.

At last a canoe came in sight, in which was one solitary woman. I called loudly to her across the water, but she was afraid and would not come near. Among the heterogeneous and somewhat outlandish variety of goods which I always carried there happened to be a dress which had once belonged to a white woman and which had been discarded years before, when the woman returned to America. It was a gorgeous purple affair, much the worse for wear. The native woman (to whom I offered it), yelling at the very top of her voice, answered: "What do I want with a dress? I'm all right as I am; I never had any such thing on in my life."

I told her that this was a very fine dress which had once been worn by a white woman.

She hesitated, but again answered: "It would only cover my ornaments so that people would not know that I have them; and besides it would not fit me."

Her "ornaments" were half a dozen large brass leg-rings which she wore between her ankles and her knees.

But necessity in this instance was not only loud, but eloquent. I pleaded that she could rattle her ornaments as she walked—which they know well how to do—and the people would think that she had ever so many; and, besides, when they were covered she would not need to keep them polished. As to its fitting, I yelled to her that I had scissors, needle and thread, and that I would make it fit perfectly. Being at various times engineer, carpenter and blacksmith, it was easy enough to be a dressmaker.

There was some persuasion in my arguments, for again she hesitated. But, after further reflection, she moved on, replying: "I'm all right as I am;" in which mind I presume she continues to this day.

Two hours after nightfall another canoe approached, in which were several men whom on a former occasion I had towed across the bay, and they were now eager to do anything possible to help me. I borrowed their canoe and engaged one of their men. The canoe was a lamentable and ancient affair. One side was badly split, and in the other side there was a part so rotten that I thought I could have thrust my foot through it. The sail was a mosaic of old shirts and other cast-off garments. The sheet was a bit of rotten rope pieced out with vine. After a thorough inspection I was unable to pronounce the craft seaworthy, but I decided to risk it; and, in case of emergency, I provided myself with a saucepan and a ball of twine: the former to bail out water, and the latter for a variety of uses.

Ndong Koni and Ndong Bisia, besides the stranger, returned with me. Both boys made humorous comments upon the canoe and begged me not to attempt to cross the

bay in it. But I did not see that I had any alternative. So we set out upon the deep with no other material resources than a saucepan and a ball of twine. At first we were in quiet water ; but after a few minutes, having turned a point of land, we were suddenly out on the bay. As we got further out the wind increased and blew hard, and the sea, though not really bad, was far too rough for such a canoe. Nothing but sheer exhaustion saved me from a state of fright. But, what was more significant, the two Ndongs were also alarmed for our safety.

I was in the bottom of the canoe, reclining against a thwart, on the verge of asleep, but conscious of all that was going on. With the increasing wind and the straining of the whole canoe I felt that something must soon happen by way of climax. The only question was whether the collapse, when it came, would be particular or general. Suddenly a gust of wind was followed by a crash. The boom was gone, the sheet broken, the sail torn. A passing wave drenched us and almost swamped the canoe. Then I plied the saucepan diligently, while Ndong Koni dexterously managed the canoe—for we were in the trough of the sea—and Ndong Bisia and the other man, using the ball of twine, made a new sheet and tied the torn sail. Before long we were again speeding ahead, though not so fast, for we had no boom. We had other startling experiences during the night ; but at length we reached the land shortly before daylight.

I have told more than enough for my purpose and have admitted irrelevant details. We were in extreme danger that night, and more than once we doubted whether we would reach land. But through all the long night, with its mischances and dangers, nothing else so impressed me even at the time, and nothing else still remains with me so vividly, as the devotion of those two boys, Ndong Koni and Ndong Bisia ; their anxiety for my safety and

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their utter disregard of their own danger. And if occasion had come, I know that they would have sacrificed their lives to save mine. Such boys are worth labouring for and worth living for.





THE PRIMARY CLASS IN MELVIN FRASER'S BULU SCHOOL.

## XI

### SCHOOLBOYS

**U**PON my first arrival in Africa—at Batanga—Dr. Good, Mr. Kerr and myself immediately prepared for an overland journey to the Bulu interior.

Early one morning, the caravan being ready and in form, we were about to move, when, at the last moment, a small boy, frightfully dirty, came bounding out of the dark forest, all out of breath as if chased by cannibals, and throwing himself at my feet, entreated me to take him to the interior as my personal attendant. Every white man is supposed to have a "boy." I had expected to engage a Bulu boy upon reaching the interior. But the African has a remarkable talent for importunity. This boy said his name was *Lolo*, and I half relented at the sound of it. *Lolo* might have been ten or eleven years old ; although, as Dr. Good remarked at the time, it was not easy to understand how he could get so much dirt on him in only ten years.

"Go and wash yourself in the Atlantic Ocean," I said ; "and when I see what colour you are I shall consider the matter of engaging you."

As a matter of fact, the African is surprisingly clean—for a savage ; and this boy had probably accumulated most of his dirt in his desperate plunge through the jungle-paths that he might reach Batanga before the caravan should set out. He proved to be a very handsome boy, of delicate features and intelligent expression, and with irresistibly beautiful eyes. He was lighter in

colour than the average. And I take this opportunity of saying that there are as many shades of complexion among Africans as among other people. There are differences between tribes and between individuals of the same tribe. As one goes towards the interior the tribal colour is decidedly lighter. The Mpongwe people are black—sometimes almost coal-black—beside the light-brown Fang. There are individual Fang who are yellow. Ndong Koni is as fair as an average mulatto. And when the skin is smooth and soft this colour is the favourite complexion. But the albino (and they are not uncommon) is an abhorrence.

Lolo's eyes danced with joy when I engaged him. African eyes as compared with others, besides being remarkable organs of sight, serve a great variety of secondary uses. They can laugh, or sing, or plead, or weep; they can love, or they can break all the commandments. But the most beautiful and expressive eyes in Africa are those of the boys. Lolo at once regarded this new relationship as a kind of fatherhood on my part; and he amply repaid me, not only in faithful service, but also in personal devotion which was quite pathetic, and which in the course of events was put to an extreme test. He was both brave and affectionate—a typical African boy.

On my part, it was my knowledge of Lolo that first inspired me with a strong desire for a school, and enabled me to realize what a moral factor a school of such boys might become in transforming the life of the people. The African baby is a beautiful, solemn-eyed little creature, who looks out at the world as if he were undecided whether to stay. About half of them decide not to stay. The African baby is cunning and bright, but it seldom cries, and it is not given to play nearly as much as the white child. As the child grows older he cheers up. It has been said that only when he reaches years of indiscre-

tion does the African become joyful. From that time on he is joyful to the end. But the African boy, before he becomes stupidly happy, bears the strongest stamp of humanity and is more interesting than at any other stage in his career.

On the first long march into the forest, Lolo easily kept up with the caravan and when we arrived in camp busied himself in waiting upon "his white man"—opening my box of clothing and getting everything that I wanted, taking off my shoes, bringing water, making my bed, helping the cook, waiting at supper and a score of other duties. On the first day of this journey we passed through Lolo's town, about two or three hours from the coast. The chief was Lolo's own father and there was some likelihood of trouble; for the boy had slipped away without his father's knowledge. Lolo hid in the bush while I sat down in the palaver-house and called for the chief, thinking it best to tell him that I had employed his boy and in some way to win his consent. He kept me waiting an unusually long time. But when he appeared no explanation was necessary; it was evident that he had been making his toilet. He was dressed in a pink calico Mother Hubbard, which came about to his knees and was longer in front than behind. I thought he had it on wrong side to the front, but I was not sure. It was the more incongruous because he was very tall and strongly built. He was so preoccupied with this new robe of state that it was the easiest thing in the world for him to part with a son; and there was no need of a present, nor even of diplomacy. During my first term in Africa, a year and a half, Lolo was with me all the time.

He had been with me a whole month, and I had about concluded that I had ensnared an angel, when one day I discovered in him a large inheritance of latent savagery. There was another boy at Efulen about the same age as

Lolo. They used the same bucket to fetch water. A dispute arose as to who should have the bucket first. The dispute developed by rapid stages into a quarrel, and then a fight. An extreme unwillingness to part with the bucket was followed by excessive willingness; and when I came in sight, they were passing it back and forth to each other with deplorable vivacity, which threatened to put the bucket out of service for all time. But their savage yells and distortions of countenance were so amazing and impressive that the flying bucket was reduced to an insignificant detail. As I approached they closed in upon each other, then fell to the ground each with his arms tight around the other's neck and intent upon nothing short of murder. Having rolled over several times, they came to the edge of a very steep hill that had been cleared for a road. Down this hill they rolled together at such a rate that they continued to cling to each other for safety and because there was nothing else to cling to. They received so many jolts and bruises on the way that about the time they reached the bottom, or soon after, a bond of sympathy united them and they were friends.

Shortly afterwards I fell sick with a fever and lay in bed several weeks, first in a tent and then in a native hut. It was through those long, weary weeks that I fully tested the patience and the devotion of Lolo, and the little servant of the jungles became a friend whom I shall never forget. As I grew worse the people when approaching had to be warned not to make a noise, and warned again after their arrival, and warned once a minute while they remained. When Lolo was not doing this or engaged in some other urgent service he was sitting beside my bed, sometimes keeping cold water on my head, or fanning me, and if no immediate service was necessary he still sat there so as to be on hand when I required him. There was nothing to look at but bark

walls and an earthen floor and he could not even see those very well, for empty salt-bags had been hung over the windows to darken the room. I marvelled at his devotion, which I had done nothing in the world to earn, except that I was fond of him. It was no sense of duty that impelled him, nor any moral obligation—the African is not strong on morals—but it was purely a service of love, and it would have done credit to any white friend. Often when he thought I was asleep I felt his hand laid on my forehead to see if the fever was high. Often, indeed, the little African boy in the service of the white man regards him with an abandoned devotion peculiar to his race, and with a love which his own father has never awakened, although there is bound up with it all the moral possibilities of the boy.

After leaving Kamerun I still kept track of Lolo. Others followed me who were at least as good to him as I was ; and it is a great satisfaction to know that he did not grow up into a savage. And yet of such stuff are savages made. Hamlet, in the churchyard, reflecting sadly upon the base uses to which our bodies may return, observes that imagination may trace the noble dust of Alexander till one finds it stopping a bung-hole ; and that “Imperius Cæsar, dead and turned to clay, May stop a hole to keep the wind away.” It is a matter for at least as grave reflection that out of the same living boy may be made the bloodthirsty savage, or the kind of man which is called “the noblest work of God.” Which of the two a boy is destined to become depends somewhat on whether his name happens to be *Lolo*, or *John*.

It was years after that I opened, at Baraka, in the French Congo, a boarding-school for Fang boys. At the beginning of the term I gathered the boys and brought them to Baraka with the *Dorothy*. The mountain does not come to Mahomet, so Mahomet goes and fetches it.

As they were scattered over the entire area of the great Fang field, the opening of the school was a formidable labour of two weeks ; and it was also the most exhausting and trying experience of the whole year. For these two weeks were spent not in actual travel, but nearly all of it in the towns in red-hot contentions with the parents of the boys, who at the first were always unwilling to let them come to the school. In the more remote towns many of them suspected that I wanted to sell the boys into slavery, or even to kill them for some unknown purpose. There were days, before the school was well known, when I was utterly disheartened by their continual refusal, in town after town, to let me have their boys, though there were many bright lads in most of the towns.

The boys themselves would have come ; the trouble was with their parents. Sometimes I was constrained to say that the parental institution was an intolerable nuisance ; or, at least, that the African child might well envy the blessed Melchizedek who was without father or mother. But orphans are not to be found. Each child has a score of parents ; for a child's parents include all his uncles and aunts even several degrees removed. The child of course knows his own parents and makes a difference between them and the rest ; but he addresses them all as "Father" or "Mother," and they divide parental authority among them, all taking a hand in the child's bringing-up : and it must be admitted that no better way could be devised for bringing up a first-class savage.

I usually held a service in the town. Then I asked the people for boys for my school, explaining the purpose of the school. The first reply was always a loud general consent—which did not deceive me ; for I knew that it was only general and did not apply to any particular boy. As soon as a boy jumps up and says, "I want to go," immediately several fathers and a score of mothers

order him to sit down ; another boy expresses his desire to come, and another score of parents protest. Then the war is on ; and during its progress I usually receive a goodly share of cursing and abuse. With some I argue, with some I plead ; sometimes I flatter, sometimes I scold—anything to get the boy. Besides diplomacy, a present of a piece of laundry soap was a necessity. I carried the yellowest kind of it, in long bars which I cut off by the inch.

I would not take any boy, whom I had not had before, without his parents' consent. And if I failed to obtain their consent, however unreasonable they might be, I declined to take the boy, though I often left him crying on the bank, or sometimes fighting a whole mob of his numerous relations single-handed. But if the boy had been in my school before and I had expended months of labour upon him the question was quite different. I then felt that I had a claim upon him, and I would take him if I possibly could, even in spite of his parents.

In one town I met a fine boy, Ndong Nzenye, a tiny and handsome child, who had already been in my school. Of course he wished to return, and I was delighted that there seemed to be no parental objections. But at the last moment the inevitable mother appeared, and on general principles vetoed his coming. When she saw that she was unable to prevail she flew at him to give him a parting blow. He ran the length of the street—the woman following at his heels—and back again, and towards me for protection. I also ran towards him ; but she was gaining on him, and just before we met she struck him, on the back, a blow with her fist that hurt him badly, and with a cry he fell into my arms. She said : “ Now you can go with your white father ; ” and she went into the house looking as if she thought she had done a good deed.

He was leaving home for six months and that was his farewell. One naturally wonders whether there are any moral possibilities for a boy who comes of such stock and from such a home. Yet that boy, as I knew him for two years, in the school and out of it, was gentle, obedient and lovable ; though if he had remained in that town he would have grown up a savage like his people.

Although such mothers are not uncommon, yet as a rule when it was settled that the boy was coming to school his mother would prepare him some little delicacy to eat on the way ; and occasionally, though seldom, I have been touched by evidences of real tenderness. In a certain far-away bush-town, more than one hundred miles in the interior, I approached an old woman to plead her consent for her boy who was eager to come with me. The Fang word for *no* is *koko* (kaw-kaw). As soon as I had spoken she began shaking her head, in regular time with her words, and repeating in a continuous monotone : "Ko-ko-ko-ko-ko-ko-ko," on and on, like an agitated crow, all the time I was talking, and seeming not to stop for breath. I talked loud however, and she heard. I told her how much the other boys who belong to that town would in future surpass her boy, until at length I saw that her judgment was convinced and was gaining a slow victory over her feelings. She was still shaking her head, and she continued the ceaseless "Ko-ko-ko-ko" ; but big tears were rolling down her cheeks, for she knew that she was going to yield. She was gradually lowering her voice, while I went on to say that I would take good care of her boy and that I could teach him many things that she did not know. By this time, though she was still shaking her head very slowly, her voice had died out. I gave the woman a big piece of laundry soap—four inches perhaps.

In one town a father whose boy had been in my school





**EKANG.**  
A little scholar.



**DISPENSARY—THE DAILY CLINIC.**  
At the extreme end, on the spectator's left, Mendam (see pp. 191, 198)  
is the boy who is kneeling, and has his hands on another  
boy's shoulders.

refused to let him come the second time, giving as his reason that I was teaching him not to kill people, while he wished him to kill. The father had heard him, after he had been in my school, teaching the people of the town a new commandment : "Thou shalt not kill." I tried my best to get the boy back again in the school in spite of his father ; but I did not succeed. I wonder how many he has killed by this time !

In a certain town at the head of one of the smaller rivers of the lower Gaboon there was one of my boys, named Ekang, a little fellow whom I regarded as the brightest boy in school ; at least he led them all in French. I reached the town about ten o'clock at night. The people were all asleep ; but Ekang soon heard my voice in the street and came quickly. He approached making amusing and mysterious signs to me, enjoining silence, which he explained when he came up by whispering : "She's asleep."

There was no need to explain who "she" was. But even while he was speaking "she" had awakened and was charging furiously down the street. The boy proposed that I should take his hand and run ; but the suggestion did not appeal to me ; so I turned and faced the foe. Ekang got behind me, and for further safety put his arms around my waist. She made a dash at him, but he circled around to the other side. Then began a gymnastic performance of which I was literally the centre, the two revolving about me, first one way, then the other, the boy's arms still around my waist, and both of them keeping up a lively and impressive conversation, which, with the African, is inseparable from action. If I have the slightest degree of that personal dignity that would seem to be the right of a man who believes the first chapter of Genesis, neither mother nor son recognized it. Failing to lay hold of him in this manner she

then tried to catch his hands at my waist ; but here I asserted my rights and kept her at full arms' length. When I told her that I really could not have her so near to me, she replied : " I'm not after you [which greatly relieved me] : I'm after my boy ; for I'm his mother."

I said that it was impossible that she could be his mother ; that mothers love their children, and that she talked as if she wanted to kill this child ; and seeing that he was one of my favourite boys I must take him away from her cruelty. A long and trying altercation followed, despite the late hour, and a hard day's work. At last she was so far reduced, or so sleepy that it was only a matter of judging how much soap it would take to complete the victory. It took nearly half a bar ; but it sealed a strong friendship.

I could almost write a poem on laundry soap. I had never before imagined the intimate relation of soap and sentiment. Even in our own land it ranks about next to godliness : but in Africa godliness usually takes a second place to laundry soap. My own method was to try godliness first and then to follow up the effect with laundry soap.

One mother, who was not in town when her husband let me have their boy, having heard upon her return that the boy had gone, immediately followed us in a canoe, and overtook us at the next town. She came close to the launch and, shrieking like a maniac, took a rank poison which she had provided for the purpose, and holding it up in her hand declared that if I would not deliver the boy to her instantly she should swallow the poison. I parleyed with her a while until I felt that she probably meant what she said. After death, she assured me, she would haunt me and cause me all kinds of trouble as long as I lived. My wives would fall in love with other men and would run away ; as fast as I could

marry others they also would leave me. This was an appalling prospect for a single man ; so I gave her the boy.

Towards the close of a tour of this kind the nights were uncomfortable because of the many that had to be accommodated in the launch. I have never laid claim to genius except on the ground that I could put more boys into one bed than any man of my generation. The launch was supposed to provide sleeping room for six persons. But more than once I made it accommodate as many as thirty, ten of them being adults. The retiring of such a company at bedtime was a strategic performance that required strict and skilful oversight and called for some very precise manoeuvres.

It was much more difficult to get boys from the towns of the upper river. The people were more ignorant and savage. One day on one of these trips, after several successive failures, I called at a certain town, *Ikala*, where I held a service and asked for boys and after much talking procured one boy. Then I went further up the river to a town named *Mfu*, where I anchored for the night. It was the hot season of the year. I had left Angom at daylight that morning, had done some hard work on the engine, had called at several towns and had held a service in each, preaching in undershirt, overalls and grease. Besides there was the responsible work of navigating in these rapid waters of the upper river—in short I was dead tired. After a hasty supper, I went ashore and held a long service at *Mfu*. The attendance was very large and was followed by endless conversation ; for a white face was a rare sight and the message of the Gospel quite strange. When I asked for boys one boy said he wanted to come ; but he had overlooked the consideration of his mother's consent. A little later she burst upon the scene in a tropical rage. She was fairly crazed with anger. I tried to persuade her that I had no

intention of eating her boy, nor of turning him into a monkey or a hobgoblin. On the matter of the monkey she was not easily convinced, for she had heard of white men doing such things and selling the monkeys on passing steamers. "Moreover (observing my eye-glasses), what was that thing that I wore on my eyes," she would like to know, "but the very diabolical fetish by which I changed people into monkeys? and I had best take care how I looked at her through that fetish, for she was not a person to be trifled with, but very dangerous when roused, though naturally good."

She was so ugly with anger, and so ferocious that if my glasses had really been endowed with power to change her into an average monkey I might have been tempted to use them for the improvement of her looks and her manners. There was no use in talking that night; she scarcely heard me; and about ten o'clock I returned to the launch, without the boy, and dreadfully tired.

In the interval of my absence, the man of Ikala who had given me his boy, repenting of his goodness (the only thing the savage ever repents of), had followed me up the river with several friends, all armed, and had stolen the boy from the launch. Nor did he even have the good manners to leave the two inches of soap that I had given him.

Next morning before breakfast I again landed, hoping by more substantial eloquence to persuade the woman of Mfu. For the boy, whose name was *Mfega*, was a very manly little fellow and wanted to come as much as I wanted to have him. I took with me a pair of bright, brass arm-rings that had cost seven cents—the largest present I ever made for the purpose. I turned them about in the sunlight as I passed her house, and indifferently rattled them. After a while I went straight to

her house and offered her the rings for the boy. Notwithstanding Paul's contempt, I found the eloquence of sounding brass more persuasive than the tongue of an angel, which I had before assumed. She surrendered him to me, not even prescribing how he should be cooked. Mfega returned to his town after several months and he taught these same people to sing our hymns and told them many things he had learned about the true God ; and my reception ever after that was friendly and cordial.

I then crossed the river to another town, called *Fula*, where the government had lately established a post, which was in charge of two black soldiers of Senegal, imported by the French. I visited in *Fula* a while and then set out to a bush-town, or group of towns, called *Nkol Amvam*, more than two hours from the river. I have said elsewhere that there is no such thing as a *mile* in Africa, and that periods of time are used as terms of linear distance. The road was at the very worst, much of the way knee-deep in mud, for it was the wet season. The boys called it *ebol nzen*—a rotten road. The part of one that was above ground was kept moist by the dripping undergrowth that met across the path, which was also full of thorns and briers. Seldom had I travelled on any such road, and not at all since the days, long past, when I had walked with Dr. Good in the Bulu interior. I had now been in Africa a long time, and this road was almost too much for me.

I had with me for guide one of my schoolboys, *Mendam*, who lived in a town a little further down the river. *Mendam* was one of the characters of the school, independent and original, a chucklesome boy with the best laugh in the school. *Mendam* thought that the walk over such a road was too much for "his white man" in his present state of health, and I was touched by the feeling of regard and sympathy that he showed. We

came to a running stream almost to our knees, clear and cool, so grateful and refreshing that I halted and stood in the middle of it for some time, quite tired. Immediately Mendam was on his knees washing the mud off my feet and trousers.

Though I had never before been in Nkol Amvam I had had five of their boys in my school the preceding year. The chief had brought them out to the river. I was therefore not entirely a stranger, and as usual the exceedingly kind reception which I received from all the people was in striking contrast to that of those towns from which I had never had boys in the school; and the boys themselves fairly shouted for joy. This time they wanted me to take all the boys in the town. I held a service and then started back to the river taking nine boys from Nkol Amvam.

I reached Fula at noon, just in time to prevent a quarrel between my crew and the two soldiers who were in charge of the government post. These natives of Senegal, although they know French, and many of them have some education, are still savages; and it is a pity that they should ever be armed and left among a people who are foreign to them without the supervening authority of a white man. They are cruel and bestial. These two men were a terror to all the husbands in the surrounding towns. This day they had come into the town, and seeing two of my men, Ndong Koni and Toko, who were chatting freely with the people and naturally attracting a good deal of attention, they thought they would let the townspeople see that they were the superiors of these coastmen. To their insolence my men responded with contempt, and the quarrel had gone about as far as mere words could go when I arrived. I soon settled that palaver and we hurried on board, and started down the river.

We had great difficulty in turning the launch. The current was exceedingly swift, a roaring torrent, and the channel narrow and dangerous. As we began to turn, the bow necessarily came close to the bank into slack water, while the stern was in the strong middle-current. And before we could get sufficient way on her the stern would be carried down leaving her bow still up-stream and headed for the bank. Twice we had to drop the anchor. Then we threw out a line from the stern and ~~passed~~ it around a tree, and weighing the anchor let the bow turn with the current. We were soon rushing down the river through rapids and whirlpools, and swirling currents. We called at one or two towns on the way, and reached Angom about three o'clock, where I had work for the rest of the day. It was a great relief to get back into the well-known channel of the broad deep river that "flows unvexed to the sea."

On the way up the river the preceding day, we had stopped at a town where one of my former schoolboys, Ngema, whose father refused to let him come again, said that he would like to go up the river with me to the towns beyond, expecting to stop on the way back. I told him that I could not stop at his town coming down ; so he took a small canoe in tow. Next day, when we made our last stop before passing his town, he got into the canoe and was towed behind us ; but when he was near home he suddenly scrambled upon the launch and as we passed by he cut the tow-line and called out to the people to send some one after the canoe, that he was going back to school with me. I of course consented to his coming, for he had already been in my school two terms and I had a claim on him. I was delighted with the plan and greatly enjoyed carrying him swiftly past his town while a concourse of his scandalized parents stood on the bank executing fantastic gestures of remonstrance ;

for, standing beside the engine, I could not hear their words. I waved back at them pleasantly as we swept around a curve out of their sight.

Later in the day, when we were at Angom, Ngema came to me with a peculiar expression that combined amusement and annoyance, with his head inclined to one side as if he were too weak to hold it up, being quite overcome by some piece of intelligence. He said, "Mr. Milligan, father has come." At the same time a loud noise, increasing as it approached, confirmed the news. But I was not alarmed, as I had the man at a disadvantage, away from his own town. Supposing that we might stop at Angom, he had followed us in a canoe. The boy kept close to me, while I went on with my work, not paying much attention to the father's loud remonstrance, but occasionally jesting with him on the score of the boy's success in getting away from his town. The African likes to be teased; it is the consummate expression of brotherly love. In the evening when I was about to start for the coast I went to him and said: "Now don't you think you have cursed me enough for this trip? Can't we be friends before I go?"

Looking somewhat abashed, but no longer unfriendly, he replied quietly: "A bar of soap would settle the palaver."

The African savage is more than "half child." I was sure that when I would take these boys back to their towns, no matter what might have been the circumstances under which I obtained them, their parents would be the best friends I had in the town.

That evening I started down the river with the *Evangeline* in tow, which had been at Angom while we were up the river. I made two short stops to take on more boys. An entertaining episode occurred at one of these places. Eight boys, seeing the *Dorothy* coming

down the river, came out in a large canoe, some of them expecting to go with me to Baraka. They had not the least idea of the speed or the momentum of the *Dorothy*, and they ran straight across her bow. It was an exciting moment when the river suddenly closed over a canoe and eight boys and a terrific yell. I scarcely knew which of the submerged elements formed the largest bubbles on the surface. But they all came up—boys, canoe, and yell—and we secured them.

I had in all fifty-one persons on board the *Dorothy* and the *Evangeline*. I ran all that night and reached Baraka in the early morning. But I must tell the story of that night; for we encountered a tornado on the way.

I usually left Gaboon in the morning so as to have the first thirty miles of the journey past and get into the river before the sea breeze became strong. In returning it was not so easy to choose the time for this part of the journey; and I sometimes encountered a rough sea. On this occasion I had intended to anchor over night at a point sixty miles from Gaboon and finish the journey in the early hours of the next day. But I felt the strain of responsibility for this big human cargo and I was anxious to reach home. Sleep would be impossible for me in the crowded launch. When I considered also that the sea is usually more quiet at night, I decided to go on the remaining sixty miles to Gaboon. The moon and the stars were shining brightly above us, and almost as brightly in the depths of the swift, silent river. When we reached the sea it was as smooth as satin, and it continued so for a few hours. The air was so still that at length the stillness became ominous, and I began to fear that it was the calm that precedes a storm.

A black cloud loomed up from the horizon which we recognized as the signal of the tornado. As usual there seemed to be two skies, the one revolving within the

other, in opposite directions. But the black cloud hurried towards the zenith, spreading abroad, until in the course of a few minutes it covered the entire sky, blotting out every star. We hastily closed all the windows and shutters and carried down some of the stuff from the top of the launch; but there was not time to save all. The darkness above and around us seemed palpable like smoke, and beneath us the sea was like ink. There was not a light on sea or land to guide us and of course we could not see the shore-line, which we had always followed instead of steering by the compass. We could only take the soundings and keep out in deep water. I do not want to frighten my readers as I was frightened that night; so I hasten to say that nothing came of it except the fright. But, having the sole responsibility for the lives of those fifty persons, the strain was great and I could have taken Jonah's place and have been flung overboard for the safety of the rest. We moderns are more practical, however, and I took the soundings, myself heaving the lead. In such a moment I could not trust a native to do it—except Ndong Koni, and he was at the wheel. For the native is accustomed to the canoe, and in a storm his instinct would be to go to the shore. In a moment of peril he would be not unlikely to follow his own instinct instead of my orders.

Suddenly the wind came; the tempest was unchained. We first heard its roar in the distance; and in a moment the tornado was on. I fairly lost my breath at the first swoop of it. The launch quivered and trembled like a frightened horse. Once or twice she swayed so far over that the small boys screamed, and then realizing that this was a life-and-death struggle, and that it depended entirely upon her, she braced herself for the battle. The poor *Dorothy*! Like some of her fellow missionaries she was overworked. Intended only for inland waters,

she was not only greatly overloaded, but also required to fight her way through a tropical tornado on a wide sea. We gave her half speed and steered right into the storm. The first blast carried away all that was on top of the launch. The wind raged fiercer and louder; but the *Dorothy* somehow held right on. Fortunately she had to contend only with the wind; and not with wind and wave, for the sea was not yet rough. At last the welcome rain came, falling as it falls only in the tropics. Soon afterwards the wind died down, but the rain continued to fall for hours, and it seemed ice-cold.

Through all that storm, when the *Dorothy* was toiling in the sea, and afterwards through the rain, for more than two hours, I stood outside on the small forward deck throwing the heavy lead without stopping, and directing the man at the wheel. As we anchored the day was breaking, which made twenty-four hours of continuous work. But all the following day, whether at work or rest, I was thinking of the long overdue furlough.

## XII

### A SCHOOL

**I** SAID that Mendam had the best laugh in the school ; and a good heart went with it. A much younger boy, Mba, came from a town near where Mendam lived. But they were not of the same clan. Both boys were from towns far up the river and neither of them had ever seen the sea until they came to my school. Like all interior people they thought that the whole world was one great "bush." Mba was shy and sensitive and Mendam became a *big brother* to him through the school year. I think the *Big Brother* idea, now popular in America, must have come from Africa. The two boys became devotedly attached to each other. Mendam helped Mba with his lessons ; helped him also to take the jiggers out of his feet.

One day just before dinner several boys were down in the gully behind the school when they suddenly came upon a python. They announced it with a shout that brought the entire school stampeding down the hill. Mba had his whole dinner of rice and smoked fish on his plate at the moment when he heard the shout. He ran with it in his hand until he came to the path leading down into the gully, and then, naturally, he set the plate down in the path while he hurried on. But how was Obiang to know that Mba's dinner was right in the middle of the path when he came tearing down the hill to kill the python? Obiang planted his foot fair on the plate, leaving a large track and not much else. Mba, after a vain hunt for the python, came back to enjoy his dinner. I hope we shall never get so old that we cannot

sympathize with the pangs of a hungry boy. Mba was as inconsolable as the mother bird whose "brood is stol'n away." But it only lasted till Mendam arrived.

"Never mind, Mba," he said, "I'll give you half of my dinner. I'll give you *more* than half." That was some sacrifice for a healthy, hungry boy who was much bigger than Mba.

But the tragedy of life begins early in Africa. One day the news came that war had broken out between neighbouring towns up the river and that Mba's father had killed Mendam's father.

It was a bitter grief for both boys, and a hard struggle on the part of Mendam ; for the blood of countless generations in his veins cried vengeance. By all the codes and customs that ever he had heard of before he came to school he should have hated Mba with a hatred that would last for life. It was a hard struggle ; but if the Christian faith in him had not triumphed—if the friendship of the two boys had been broken—I don't think I would have told the story.

Many friendships were formed in the school which in after years would surely become a power for the prevention of war and the shedding of blood. Boys of neighbouring clans, mutually hostile, clans between which there were old feuds ; clans which are bred in the belief that it is a virtue to hate each other—in that schoolboys of such clans found themselves side by side ; and in the social alignments of the school these very boys were drawn together by the fact that, coming from neighbouring communities, they had much in common. These school friendships were exceedingly strong ; for the African's affections are his substitute for moral principles. It is impossible that such boys should afterwards contract the mutual hate of their fathers, or without compunction shed each other's blood.

Many of the boys when they came to Baraka had only the smallest rag of clothing and some had none. I got just boys—nothing more. I had their clothes made and ready for them before the school opened. The dress which a fellow missionary devised for them was a gingham shirt with a yoke, and loose sleeves to the elbow, and the usual cotton robe (a *cloth* they call it) of bright colours bound with red or white, fastened around the waist and falling below the knees. They wore only the cloth in the schoolroom, the shirts being kept for parade. I disliked to see trousers on the natives, with a few exceptions of those who were perfectly civilized in mind and manners and somewhat cultivated in taste. It immediately and unconsciously introduced a standard of dress and taste to which they could not measure up; a standard entirely different from that which was applicable to a primitive people in conditions of simplicity and freedom. Moreover, the natives, both men and women, as well as children, look by far the best in bright colours, not admissible in our style of clothing. They do not look well in white; and in black they are ugly. But red, yellow, blue, orange, purple, green—any of these colours, or all of them, are becoming and appropriate to their climate.

The day's program for this school of seventy-five boys was as follows: At 5:45 A. M. the rising bell rang and at 6:15 I met the boys in the schoolroom for prayers, after which they had breakfast. From seven o'clock until nine they cut grass and did other necessary work in the yard. In the proper season they picked the oranges and gathered them. From nine o'clock until half-past three they were in school, with a recess of half an hour in the morning for taking jiggers out of their feet, and an hour at noon for dinner. At half-past three the dispensary was opened for the sick and ailing. From four o'clock

till five they worked again in the yard, and at five they all took a bath in the sea. On Saturday morning the program was the same until ten o'clock. Then a small piece of soap was given to each boy and they all washed their clothing in a stream that passed near their house. Extravagance always goes with improvidence, and both are prominent characteristics of the African. But in nothing else is their extravagance more flagrant than in their use of soap, although they are so eager for it and have so little of it.

The cutting of grass is a constant labour. There is no such thing as a lawn; the grass is very coarse and rank, and does not form a sod. There is every condition of growth—good soil, heat and moisture; and the rapid growth of vegetation is astonishing. Here and there on the mission premises were large beds of the strange sensitive-plant, which at the least disturbance folds its petals together face to face. Before one, as he walks through it, its beautiful foliage is spread like a heavy green carpet, while behind him is nothing but scraggy, wilted vines and no foliage at all. But in a few minutes it opens again.

The Africans use a short, straight cutlass for cutting grass, which requires that they stoop to the ground. Even at the best, it is very slow work. I, like others before me, imported a scythe, and showed several of the workmen how to use it. But they did not take to it. As soon as I disappeared it was put carefully away for my own use.

Besides the cutting of grass, there were roads to keep in repair, cargo to land, or carry from the beach to the storeroom, and much other work. The work of the boys saved the necessity of hiring a number of men; and so the boys paid a large part of the expense of keeping them. As a matter of fact, the maintenance of each boy

(his food and clothing) cost six or sometimes seven dollars for an entire year.

It required a vast expenditure of energy and continual oversight to get seventy-five boys to go to work promptly and to work well. They were just at the age when total depravity takes the concrete form of laziness; but they were not more lazy than so many white boys.

One day when they were cutting the very long grass in the back of the garden, there was a sudden cry, "Mvom!" (python). Lying in the grass was a monster python with several coils around a dog which it was preparing to swallow. It was a dog that we all knew, the only one of a respectable size in the community. Being pre-occupied with the dog, and partly hidden in the grass, it did not seem to pay any attention to the boys. About twenty-five of them remained to watch it while fifty came to call me. Baraka was well provided with various fire-arms, but there was not a single piece that would actually shoot. As a rule the appearance was all that was really necessary. But in a real emergency this left something to be desired. Finding myself without a weapon I went to the garden and looked at the monster snake, and when I saw that it did not seem disposed to leave so fine a supper I cautioned the boys to keep away from it while I ran to an English trading-house—*Hatton & Crokson's*—in search of a weapon. The traders were as defenseless as the mission. The manager, however, recalled that there was in his possession a pistol, a precious affair, belonging to the firm. I waited exactly half an hour while he put it "in perfect condition," and loaded it. I kept on waiting while he stood with it in his hand telling me what a fine weapon it was, instructing me in its use, and especially requesting that I should bring it back myself and not entrust it to a native for reasons which he fully explained. I then returned to the mission wonder-

ing whether the python might not take a fancy to something more delicate than a poor dog, and how many boys a python would hold. But it was still coiled about the dog not having finished crunching his bones. I crept very close, took deadly aim and fired. Deafening silence! The pistol did not go off. Again I pulled the trigger, with the same result, and again, and again. I withdrew in disgust. It was the only big game that I had ever attempted to shoot; and I had already considered what I would do with the skin.

The older boys and several men who were present had been eager all the while to attack it with their cutlasses; and I now gave them permission. They formed in line. One man was to strike first, back of the head, and all the rest instantly to follow. It had lain quiet so long and was so very sluggish that one could hardly conceive that it was alert; but at the first stroke, before the other cutlasses fell, it had gone like a flash. We could only guess at its size; but I have vowed never to record my guess. Pythons have been actually measured in Gaboon at thirty feet.

One day the schoolboys killed a very young one twelve feet long, and immediately returned to search for the parents; for they said that a mere baby python like this would not yet have left its parents' care to shift for itself. The next day after this several of the smaller boys were taken sick and I was called to the dormitory to see them. My immediate diagnosis was *python*, and I found that I was right. But none of the boys who had been in the school for more than one term joined in the feast; and some of them would no more have eaten it than I would.

The regular food of the boys was cassava and dried fish. Plantains were sometimes substituted for cassava. If we were out of fish I gave them sardines—one sardine

to each boy as his allowance of meat for a whole day ; I believe that no devout contributor to missions will charge me with extravagance. If I had neither fish nor sardines I gave them coconuts. The meat of a very ripe coconut is full of a strong oil and the natives like it. A boy's food costs less than a cent a meal.

The food for an entire day was given out at noon. They cooked their fish all together in a large kettle. During the entire year there was never a quarrel over the division of their food. I provided knives and forks and a beautiful service of tin plates and spoons, all of which was new to them as well as eating off a table—in this instance a broad shelf around the outside of the house covered by the projecting eaves. The only plates that they had ever known were leaves ; so they called the plates *leaves*, and had no other name for them. But I was rather puzzled the first time a boy came and asked me for a "leaf"—"a white man's leaf."

The schoolhouse was an old discarded residence, which had been used by native ministers and others connected with the mission. It had been good in its day, and it had a board floor ; but it was now in an advanced stage of decay. It was divided into two rooms. One day I was in the smaller room teaching a class of fifteen little boys seated on three long benches when suddenly the floor gave way and the whole class fell through. White ants were probably responsible for the collapse. The floor was elevated on posts and the ground was several feet below. One side of the room went down before the other, declining the benches so that the boys slid to the lower end and fell off all in a heap. They got up after a while and having crawled out they went around the schoolhouse and marched in at the front door. Nduna, who was teaching a class, being surprised at their entrance, said : "I thought you boys were in this other room."





SCHOOLHOUSE AND DORMITORY AT GABOON.

Esona, the wittiest boy in the school, replied : " We thought so too but we were mistaken."

The dormitory was a long, low building with earth floor, walls of bamboo and roof of palm thatch. The teacher lived in one end of it, in a large room separated by a partition. The bed was a bunk five feet wide which ran around the walls of the whole interior. This bunk was a simple device of my own. I made it with the assistance of a native carpenter out of boxes, of which there was always a great pile on hand, in which shipments of goods had been received. The bare boards with nothing else would have been by far the best beds that the boys from the interior and many of the others had ever slept upon. But there were rolls of discarded matting in the storeroom which had been accumulating for a generation. I had this washed, and spread on the beds, and even doubled, which made them positively luxurious. Their house was kept as clean as such a house could be kept. They did their cooking outside under a roof without walls, and the house was very little used except for sleeping.

This all may seem very simple—ludicrously simple. But *the simple life* is a popular vogue in these days, at least in theory ; and we were only practicing what others preached. For those boys it was such a change as cannot easily be imagined. They were taught habits of order and cleanliness, self-respect and consideration for others, to work and to think, all that is essential to civilization, and the great religious truths which are its foundation and which centre in the cross of Christ. Even if they do not become professed followers of Christ they are far removed from their former life. That life and its surroundings will never be the same to them, and will never again satisfy them.

Parents were more willing to give me sick children

than any others, because these were of little or no use at home, and they soon learned that those who went away sick were more than likely to return well.

Each day after school hours I opened the dispensary. At the beginning of the term there were usually twenty or thirty boys who were treated daily. None of them, of course, were very serious cases. Most of them had itch, all of them had worms, many had ulcers, and there were a few fevers and a few fits. In my last year in Africa a fellow missionary relieved me of most of this medical work. Some of the ulcers were dreadful, for the blood of many of these children, especially those who live near the coast, is so tainted with venereal disease that a small cut or scratch is liable to become an ugly sore, and such wounds are rarely cleansed. Long before the close of the term, however, they were nearly all well and their bodies clean and smooth.

In a former chapter I have told at some length of the scourge of the jigger, and how the discipline of the school was concentrated in an effort to make the boys keep them out of their feet. A boy who had jiggers got no food until his feet were clean. It was hard discipline, but it would have been cruel to have done otherwise. The whole of the morning recess was spent in examining their feet. Without exception the boys who had been long in the school kept themselves perfectly clean from jiggers, and they in turn were willing to examine the other boys' feet and report to me. It was a measure of self-protection; for one boy whose feet were full of jiggers would scatter thousands of them. Sometimes in the dry season, when they are worst, I had the boys haul barrels of salt water from the sea and flood the house with it.

The program of daily studies covered the subjects usually taught in primary schools, besides French and the Bible. With the help of a missionary friend I

translated into Fang a simple catechism of fifty questions and answers and a number of hymns. They committed to memory both catechism and hymns. These they invariably taught in their towns upon their return home. Some few of the boys are very bright in all their studies and learn fast—as fast as American boys; others are stupid in everything—as stupid as some American boys. The average African schoolboy, however, is not as clever as the average American boy. In the acquisition of a foreign language the African boy far surpasses the American. Yet this is not now regarded as a high order of faculty. It rather belongs to the elementary mind and the highly civilized nations tend to lose it.

I have never known an American school in which there was better order and so little exercise of discipline as in my African school. There was no flogging at all. The entire matter of discipline was confined to the jigger-palaver. Yet these boys were not by any means dull or lacking in humour. Indeed, the humour of the Negro is far more keen than that of any Asiatic race, and is nearest to our own.

But even in the best-ordered schools there will be an occasional lapse of discipline, and my school was no exception. One day in the class I called on a certain boy, Toma, to read. A knife had been stolen from my room that morning—probably by a workman—and the boys had been talking about it and wondering if any of their number could have done it. Toma was one of the larger boys and was dull at his books. Moreover, he was conscious of being backward and was easily embarrassed when he was reciting. This day as he rose to recite, a certain smart boy, Esona, whom I have already mentioned, said in a loud whisper: “Now, if anybody can’t recite his lesson that will be a sign that he has stolen Mr. Milligan’s knife.”

The effect of the remark on Toma—as Esona expected and intended—was that it embarrassed him and made it impossible for him to recite. He stumbled on from bad to worse, to the ill-concealed amusement of the class, until at last he came to a dead stop, paused for a moment, and then suddenly turned and flung his book across the room at Esona's head. It was well aimed, and it hit. Toma evidently knew some things about books that Esona had never thought of.

In singing they excelled. I am sure that only a choir of well-trained American boys could sing as well as those boys of my school. They soon acquired a reputation on the coast, and visitors, from passing steamers, having heard of them from the captains and others, asked to hear them sing; and I do not think that they were ever disappointed. There was a quartette of boys who sang beautifully. I made some phonograph records of their singing, but after bringing them all the way to New York in safety, where I used them a few times, they got broken between New York and Chicago.

The hymn, if well used, is the form in which the Christian religion will reach more people than can be reached by any other means. When these boys returned to their towns the people old and young were eager to learn the hymns, and had soon committed many of them to memory. In far-away towns that no white man had ever visited before, I have held a service, and when I started a hymn the people all joined heartily in singing. *He Leadeth Me* was the favourite of all the hymns, and was always the first one that they learned.

The routine of the day's work was liable to various interruptions. Sometimes a boy was enticed by his relations to run away from the school. I always followed, and at any cost brought him back, for fear of the demoralization of the school. I had always exacted a promise

of each boy when I received him that he would stay until the end of the term. And they never ran away except when induced to do so by people of their town whom they happened to meet. One day word was brought to me that two of the boys had run away, having been persuaded to do so by a relation who came selling food. I set out in hot pursuit with several attendants, and soon we met the man who had been overheard asking the boys to go with him. He denied all knowledge of them, but I had proof. I brought him to Baraka, bound him hands and feet and said that he would be released as soon as the boys were returned to me. In a few hours the boys arrived.

There were other interruptions. For instance, while I am engaged in the absorbing task of unfolding the implications of monotheism to a class of theological students whom I am preparing for the work of catechists, a naked Fang from the bush stalks into the room unannounced and says: "White man, what's good for worms? I'm full of them."

"Santonine and castor oil," roars the whole class in concert, with such alacrity and assurance that I wish it were one of the implications of monotheism.

"Well, I've brought two eggs," says the Fang; "good eggs—both of them laid this morning—and I want some of that medicine."

I leave the class and first spend considerable time testing the eggs. One of them is probably the oldest egg in the world. I complain to the man, and he tells me that he took his wife's word for its being laid that morning; but that he might have known better, for she is the worst liar that ever lived, and he—a lover of truth—is going to send her home to her father and demand the dowry which he paid for her. And if it be refused war will be declared between that town and his own.

I advise him that the matter of the egg is hardly worth going to war over. The other egg is middling good ; and I give him the medicine. Then I resume the theological lecture.

The most noticeable feature of this *simple life* is its bewildering complexity. There is no mental perspective. The clamour of the small but immediate interest constantly claims the attention, as a mote may bolt a landscape. Emerson's observation, that Isaac Newton was as great while engaged in tying his shoe-string as in computing the magnitude of the fixed stars, was comforting when much of my time was occupied in tying shoe-strings. Yet, after all, such a life is exactly as great, or as petty, as a man himself makes it. The shoe-string is the equivalent of a cup of cold water. And it is a fact that these small matters afford the very best kind of opportunity for personal contact and personal influence with the native.

But the worst annoyance was due to parents coming to visit their children. Sometimes half a dozen men and women would come from a distant town to visit one small boy, all of them claiming the parental relation. In the first place, such visitors could not understand why the boys should not be kept out of school while they were there. And then they could not understand why they should not stay over night or several nights, at my expense, and sleep in the boys' dormitory. Each of these matters involved a long contention. Then they could not understand why their boys should not be allowed to return home with them and spend a few days. Then they could not understand why I should not give each of them a present when they were about to take their leave. Sometimes the boys, themselves, who had been happy and content, became unsettled and wanted to go home. About every second or third day such visitors were announced. Parents were always my chief trouble in Africa. Even in fevered

dreams they haunted me. At first these contentions, which usually occurred in the morning, fairly wore me out before the day's work was well begun, but I afterwards learned to regard them as inevitable and to bear them with the least mental expense possible. My answers and protests became stereotyped, and I could carry on a vigorous contention while thinking of something else. But I tried hard not to offend these people, and somehow we always parted on friendly terms. Within a month I might meet them in some distant town, and an unkindly reception or unkindly report would defeat the purpose of my preaching.

In the middle of the term I had a picnic. Taking the *Lafayette* or the *Evangeline* in tow behind the *Dorothy* we went to a beach twelve miles away and spent the day. We had many of the usual picnic sports. But nearly all the prizes were soap, the pieces ranging from one to six inches. Their deficiency in real sportsmanship is not surprising, but it is rather amusing. A boy's effort to win a race consisted largely in attempting to disable his competitors.

They showed more of the true spirit of the sportsman in their native games and sports.

They are fond of wrestling, and they wrestle fairly well. There is a game in which two sides are chosen, and a boy of the first side, standing opposite a boy of the second side, raises his arms above his head—which the other boy must do at the same time—then claps his hands together rapidly, as often as he pleases, at length suddenly thrusting either arm in front of him as if striking a blow. The other boy must keep with him as nearly as possible, and at the right moment thrust out the corresponding arm. A certain number of "wins" makes a chief. The chief retires honourably from the game and becomes a spectator. This game is a training both for mind and muscle.

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In their own towns, where they have spears, men and boys play a game in which some object, perhaps a piece of plantain stock, is hurled along the ground, while from either side they throw their spears at it and try to "wound" it.

They have an interesting variation of *Hide and Seek*. One of their number is sent into the bush to hide. In his absence some one "curses" him. Then they all call to him and vociferously ask him: "Which of us cursed you? Which of us cursed you?" His only guide is their countenances, which he studies. If he names the right one, then the latter must hide.

They have a "laugh" game in which a boy, standing before his fellows, bids them laugh and tries in every legitimate way to compel them. He mimics various animals, or well-known persons, especially persons of great dignity. The boy who laughs exchanges places with him and in turn bids his fellows laugh. They have a mocking song which they sing to one who fails to make anybody laugh. This is a good training for oratory, which occupies a large and important place in all Africa, the land of the *palaver*. It is also a training in facial control, in which, as it seems to me, the African is no amateur.

They also have gambling games in their towns; but I do not know that habitual gambling is common.

Some of the games of the schoolboys, like some of their stories and fables, may have been borrowed from adjacent tribes. For the Fang, whom I know best, are in contact with other tribes south of them and also with the people of Gaboon, where many tribes intermingle.

The boys were very fond of dancing, in which they often indulged in the cool evening after supper. African dances are not in the least degree effeminate; and they have nothing like our round dances. Their dancing is as vigorous and masculine as their wrestling, and as a

gymnastic exercise is far better than wrestling. They dance with the whole body, keeping time with the feet, while they wag the head, sway the shoulders, rotate the thighs, agitate the muscles of the stomach until it seems to gyrate. The African dance is distinctly a "stunt." In many of the dances they follow one another round and round in Indian file.

But they also have hunting-dances and war-dances with sham fights. Some terrific battles, with uncomputed casualties, have been fought in my school yard. In one of these battles they impressed into service an enormous brass kettle which I had provided for their cooking. This and a number of old kerosene tins did noble service as a military band and reinforced their yelling battle-song. They seriously damaged the brass kettle. But I forgave them; for it was the only instance of destruction of which they were guilty during the whole year. One would scarcely expect them to study economy when a battle was raging upon which—if I might judge by the evidence of wild enthusiasm—the future of their tribe was depending. Will it seem credible, or even possible to the American, that never once did a real fight occur as an incident in these battles?

When the grass was rankest, however, or when the torrential rains had excoriated the hillside roads, and there was plenty of hard work for the schoolboys each day, they usually substituted story-telling and singing for dancing and games in the cool of the evening.

Boys in Africa and everywhere else are fond of animal stories. The story-teller imitates all the animals of his story, and as this talent differs in different individuals, the story loses nothing, but rather gains by repetition. Mendam, Nkogo, Esona and Ekang were all good story-tellers. The following stories are known widely in West Africa:

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The tortoise (which corresponds to Uncle Remus's *Brer Rabbit*) challenged the hippopotamus to a tug-of-war. The hippopotamus at first refused to believe that the tortoise was serious, but at length he accepted the challenge. Then the tortoise challenged the rhinoceros to a tug-of-war. The rhinoceros at first did not believe that the tortoise was serious, but at length he, too, accepted the challenge.

At the appointed time the tortoise was on hand with an enormous bush-rope (liana), and when the hippopotamus arrived he fastened one end of it to him and brought him to the bank of the river.

"Now," said the tortoise, "I shall fasten the other end to myself and we shall keep on pulling until you pull me into the river or I pull you into the bush."

Just then the rhinoceros came along to keep his appointment, and the tortoise fastened the end of the rope to him and said: "Now, I shall fasten the other end to myself and we shall keep on pulling until you pull me into the bush, or I pull you into the river."

Then the hippopotamus and the rhinoceros pulled against each other, and pulled and pulled. Sometimes the rhinoceros was dragged almost into the river and again the hippopotamus was dragged to the bush. At length they became completely exhausted and each of them decided to give up to the tortoise and admit defeat. For this purpose they came walking towards each other until they met. They looked at each other for a moment in surprise, and then they both cursed the tortoise.

The chameleon, despite its innocence, is an object of superstitious fear to the African, and they are disposed to regard it as superwise.

The chameleon challenged the elephant to run a race. The elephant was amused, for the chameleon is one of

the slowest creatures in the forest. But finding that the chameleon was really in earnest, the elephant accepted the challenge. So the chameleon and the elephant set out on a long race through the forest. The chameleon only started and then immediately turned back ; for he had arranged with different members of his family that one of them should be present at the end of each stage of the race. So at the end of the first stage when the elephant came dashing in, all out of breath, he found the chameleon already there.

"What? You here?" exclaimed the astonished elephant.

"Yes," said the panting chameleon, "I just got in."

"Aren't you very tired?" said the elephant.

"Not very," said the chameleon.

So they set out again. But the chameleon only started and came back, while the elephant ran on.

At the end of the next stage the elephant was again surprised to find that the chameleon had arrived a little ahead of him. And so it happened at the end of each stage until at last the elephant gave up, and confessed that the chameleon had outrun him.

In all African fables the various animals are but thinly disguised human beings.

The leopard bet his life to the antelope that if he would hide the antelope would not be able to find him. The antelope agreed, and the leopard went and hid in the forest. But the antelope found him very quickly. Then the leopard was very angry. So he told the antelope to hide and see how quickly he could find him. The antelope agreed, but he told the leopard that he would surely have his life.

Then the antelope hid and the leopard searched for him and searched and searched, but could not find him. Then he said : "I am too tired to walk any more, and I

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am hungry ; so I shall pick some of these nuts and take them to town to eat."

So the leopard filled a bag with the nuts, and when he had carried them to town he called all his people together to eat them, and he told a slave to crack the nuts for the people to eat. But, lo, out of the first nut there jumped a fine dog. Now, the leopard was married and had four wives, and each wife had her own house in which she cooked. The dog ran to the first house and asked the wife for something to eat. But the wife beat the dog and drove it out. Then the dog ran to the second house and asked for something to eat. But the second wife beat the dog and drove it out. Then the dog asked the third wife, and she also beat it. Then the dog asked the fourth wife, and she beat it and tried to kill it. But just as it was dying the dog changed into a beautiful maiden. Then the leopard wanted to marry the maiden.

"All right," she said, "but you must first kill those four wives who beat the dog and tried to kill it." And the leopard was so much in love with the maiden that he killed his four wives for her sake.

Then he asked the maiden to marry him ; but she said : "I cannot marry a husband with such dreadful nails. Won't you please have them cut?" Then the leopard cut his nails.

But again the maiden said : "I can't marry a husband with such awful eyes. Won't you please take them out?" And the leopard tore out his eyes.

Then the maiden said : "I can't marry a husband with such clumsy feet. Won't you please chop them off?" And the leopard had his feet chopped off for he loved the maiden and wanted to marry her.

But again the maiden said : "There is just one more thing that I wish you would do for me. Your teeth are frightfully ugly. Won't you have them knocked out?"

And then the leopard sent to the fireplace for a stone and had his teeth knocked out.

Then the maiden was suddenly changed into the antelope ; who said to the dying leopard : " You thought to outwit me, but I have outwitted you and have taken your life and the life of your whole family."

Towards the middle of the term the boys began to come to me voluntarily, one by one, saying that they desired to be Christians ; and before the term had closed nearly all, at least four out of five, had professed faith in Christ. How many of these would prove faithful no one could tell ; but very few of them gave me reason to doubt their sincerity. They were not baptized, nor received into the church, until they had been two years on probation. At first my confidence in their profession of faith, compared with that of adults, hesitated ; but it grew stronger with experience each passing year. The boys were not the weakest, but the best Christians in Africa. Their minds had never been warped with fetishism ; and they had a more intelligent grasp of Christian principles.

Separated from the heathen environment during a portion of their formative years—from its degrading beliefs as well as its immoral practices—and having that intimate contact with the missionary which only a boarding-school provides, the impression was nearly always lasting. " As the twig is bent the tree is inclined."

The very towns in which these boys lived became different from all other towns. A stranger travelling with me from town to town would surely notice the difference. These boys became without doubt the greatest evangelistic force in the Fang field. Africans are natural orators ; and even the small boy has not the least difficulty in expressing his thoughts appropriately. Whatever religious truth I taught the schoolboys they in turn taught their people when they returned home. They did

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what neither myself, nor any other white man, could ever have done. Boys of twelve years, or even ten, gathered the people of their towns around them, both old and young and taught them reading and whatever they had learned of arithmetic. This is a matter of observation and astonishment in all mission fields in Africa.

And all Africans have this beautiful childlike quality that they are teachable—a quality that Jesus must have had in mind when He set a child in the midst of the disciples as the symbol of Christian attainment. The biggest African chief will sit on the ground and listen to the small boy, so long as the small boy knows anything worth while that the chief does not know.

### XIII

#### THE MENTAL DEGRADATION OF FETISHISM

**N**O; it was not among the Negroes, but among the peasants of Germany that the horseshoe acquired its power of luck.

One day very long ago, in a German village, an honest blacksmith was hard at work making a horseshoe when the devil, strolling about the village, was attracted by the hammering. While looking on at the blacksmith it occurred to him that it might be a very good thing to get his own hoofs shod. Thereupon he made a bargain with the blacksmith, and the blacksmith set to work to put horseshoes on the devil. Now the honest blacksmith knew very well that it was the devil and nobody else. So he put on each of his feet a red-hot shoe, and drove the nails straight into the devil's hoofs. The devil then paid him and went his way; but the honest blacksmith threw the money into the fire. Meanwhile, the devil, after walking some time, began to suffer pain from his shoes, and as he went on the pain became worse and worse. In his torment he danced and he kicked and he raged and he swore, and still the pain became worse. Then at last, in agony, he tore the shoes off and threw them away. From that day to this whenever the devil sees a horseshoe he runs away as fast as he can go.

The superstition of the horseshoe has been so eagerly embraced by the Negro that most people seem to think that it originated with him. It is precisely like many of his own superstitions, and it shows that ignorance and superstition in Africa are like ignorance and supersti-

tion anywhere else, and that the African mind is essentially like our own.

The charm, the fetish and the relic represent ascending grades of belief. They are all associated together in what we call *fetishism*. The charm operates not by reason of any intelligence within itself but by some influence from without. The horseshoe is such a charm. One of the numerous African charms is the string which a mother ties around the waist of her child and which is worn throughout childhood. This fetish is for health. The Roman Catholic priests, in the early history of their missions on the Congo, substituted for this health-fetish a string made from the fibres of a palm that had been blessed on Palm Sunday. There is no evidence, however, that the substitution of the Roman fetish for the African fetish resulted in any marked improvement in the health of the natives.

A charm is not necessarily a physical object—like the amulet. In Africa, as among the superstitious everywhere else, it may be a word or action, a sign or symbol, a formula or incantation. To count the number of persons present on certain occasions will cause the death of at least one of them within the year. The utterance of the word *salt* at the wrong moment has been known to produce appalling consequences.

The fetish proper represents a more intelligible form of belief than the charm or amulet. One common kind of fetish implies animism; that is, that the various objects of nature have each a life analogous to that of man to which their phenomena are due. This life is inseparable from the object. The eagle's talon, the wing feathers of any bird, the claw of the leopard, the teeth of animals, and all those objects which are associated with that which is desirable or that which is fearful are valuable fetishes, because one may avail himself of the

powers inherent in such objects. The African sometimes says that the surf is in a nasty temper ; and when he uses this expression he is not speaking figuratively. The wind talks to the forest, and the forest talks to the wind. The tornado is often nothing more than a quarrel between mountain and forest, lightning against wind ; and, as one writer expresses it, we ourselves may get hit with the bits. Not that they are angry at us, but at each other, and we had best keep out of the way.

Closely related to this class of fetishes is a kind somewhat higher than the animistic fetish. In this the relation of the physical object and the power within it is not that of body and spirit but that of a house and a tenant residing in it. The spirit may leave the fetish, and then it will be of no more use. But the skill of a fetish-doctor may compel the spirit to remain. As long as it remains it is under the control of the possessor of the fetish and must do his bidding. If it should disobey he will punish it, usually by hanging it in the smoke. It is such a fetish, contained in a goat's horn, that a man walking in the forest carries suspended from his neck to make him invisible to an enemy. Another he hangs among his plantains to keep the wind from blowing them down.

But the most powerful and sacred fetish is the ancestral relic, possessed by every grown man. It is the skull of the father or other ancestral relation. Here fetishism becomes ancestor-worship. The skull is the residence of the dead father, and if it be treated well, that is, kept in a warm and dry place, the father will confer every kind of favour—success in hunting and in war, in stealing and attracting other men's wives. For death has not improved the morals of these ancestors. The son never punishes the ancestral fetish. Indeed, if he neglect it—if he let it get cold or wet—the ancestor will punish him.

Many a hunter's gun has refused to fire just at the critical moment because of such neglect. He often talks to the dead father and tells him his affairs and asks his help. This fetish is only for men, not for women. If a woman should see it she will surely die. If she even be heard talking too curiously about it she is liable to die. This is no imaginary fear on her part. For the ancestral anger, like much of the occultism of Africa, has a material basis of secret poison administered by living agents.

The fetish-doctor, or medicine-man, is to be feared. He is more powerful in some tribes than in others; but within his own tribe his reputation depends upon himself. Any shrewd fellow, should good fortune attend him for a while, may persuade the people that he can make powerful fetishes. There will be application for various fetishes at good prices. Every success enhances his reputation; and if he is very clever he will even convert failure into success. If a man return a fetish and tell him it has failed—that his goods have been stolen, his hens have not laid, his wives have eloped, or his canoe has capsized with him—the doctor will not usually dispute the failure, but will discover the reason, and more than ever impress his customer with his skill and knowledge. Sometimes as soon as he looks at it he will say that it is dead; that the spirit has escaped from it and it may as well be thrown away. Then by some occult means he discovers how this has happened. The owner, it may be, has not taken proper care of it; or an enemy has lured it away from him into his own service; or a witch has killed it. Thereupon he offers to make him another fetish at a reasonable price.

The fetish-doctor soon acquires the power of detecting witchcraft and sometimes even of discovering the witch. His diagnosis and treatment of the bewitched are interesting and varied. One particular treatment is as follows:

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Having discovered that the patient has really been bewitched, he makes several incisions on the breast. Then, after an exercise of howls and incantations, he applies his lips to the incision and sucks the wound until the patient screams; whereupon, he takes out of his mouth some article, perhaps a goat's horn, which he is supposed to have sucked out of the body of the patient, and which had been witched into him. He again applies his lips, and when the patient screams a second time he takes another article out of his mouth and displays it before the credulous people. Having thus removed a miscellaneous assortment of articles—roots, pebbles, broken pottery and other objects entirely out of place in a human anatomy—the patient is left in a fair way to recover; and if he should not it is surely not the fault of the doctor.

It is always a question to what extent the fetish-doctor is a conscious hypocrite. He usually begins practice by exploiting some particular fetish in which he really believes and whose power he has proved. Finding the trade lucrative he invents other fetishes upon the same principle—for there is a principle, that is to say, there is always some apparent relation between the ingredients of a fetish and the purpose for which it is designed. If some of his first fetishes should be successful and gain him a reputation he may come to believe in his own power. He may consciously abuse that power—and physicians in other lands have been known to do the same; but he still believes in the power—believes in fetishes and in witchcraft and in the possibility of its detection.

Africa presents to the psychologist an unexplored and inviting field. A man who possesses a fetish-skull usually invokes its aid to prevent secret unfaithfulness on the part of his wife. He compounds a certain fetish the ingredients of which include a lock of his wife's hair,

cuttings of her nails, or her saliva. This fetish he puts into the box with the father's skull; and now, it is believed, if his wife be unfaithful she will surely die; death being inflicted by the ancestor. It seems to be a fact that this fetish frequently proves effective without the aid of poison; that is to say, the woman dies. Fear often drives her to a tardy confession, which, however, affords her but small relief; for everybody tells her that she is going to die.

"You're a corpse," says one. "You're failing every day," says another.

And the poor woman, as if yielding to some occult compulsion, fails rapidly and dies. She dies, presumably, as a psychological consequence of her belief in the fetish.

One must never tell a sick person that he is going to die lest one be charged with wishing his death. In some tribes it is equivalent to a curse designed to effect death, and is liable to severe punishment.

The following dying confession was made by a woman in a Fang town of Gaboon: Years ago, when she was a child, a man of her town had given her a certain fetish-medicine, concealing it in her food. After she had eaten it he told her what he had done, and said that this medicine would effect her death at the birth of her first child. She must keep this matter secret from everybody, even from her parents, lest the medicine kill her immediately. This gloomy prospect darkened her life for years, and just before the birth of her first child she sickened and died—probably as a psychological consequence of her belief in the fetish. Such confessions are not uncommon.

The mental degradation of the African is often overlooked through the deeper regard for his moral degradation. Therefore it is my present purpose to depict the mental degradation of fetishism, and to set over against

it the new and transforming conception of God and nature which Christ imparts to the African mind.

Carlyle has said: "What notion each forms of the universe is the all-regulating fact with regard to him." Looking out upon nature and knowing of no divine intelligence ever present and presiding, the African does not discover the reign of law nor the uniformity of nature. Those phenomena of which the cause is not as obvious as the effect he relates to a supernatural cause. And since *will* is the cause that he knows by experience, he instinctively attributes natural phenomena to a personal will; not to *one* will, however, but to many; for natural phenomena are various and the moods of nature are inconsistent. He hears the crash of thunder, and if he says, "Somebody threw something," he is not very far from the ancient conception of Jupiter hurling thunderbolts. And, since that which is normal and regular does not attract attention like that which is unusual and fearful, therefore to the unreflecting mind the beneficence of nature is far less obvious than its terrors; since the laws of growth, seedtime and harvest, rain and sunshine, —all the kindly ministry of nature, is quiet and unobtrusive, while her cruelty thrusts itself upon the mind, the African concludes that the innumerable spirits which rule nature or constantly interfere with it are mostly evil and hostile.

From this view it is not a long stride to the belief that the spirits reside *in* the objects of nature, each in its appropriate object; and this is fetishism. We are all fetishists by instinct; though we may hear it with the astonishment of Molière's hero when he found that he had been talking prose all his life. Every time one slams a door in anger or kicks at a bucket—as if such things had sentience and could be hurt—he exhibits a fetish instinct.

If we bear in mind, then, that the very axioms of the African's belief obliterate the line between nature and the supernatural, and, further, that habitual lying makes the character of truth vague and uncertain, and also that he has an imagination almost as vivid as reality, we may be somewhat enabled to understand the degraded mental condition indicated by such incidents as the following, which I repeat because they are representative :

A certain woman, knowing that the penalty would be death, confessed—and with undoubted sincerity—that by witchcraft she had caused another woman's death, and was herself killed by the people.

A certain man, evidently without the slightest intention of untruthfulness, tells how that journeying one day in the forest he had met two strange men who by fetish power had thrown him to the ground, had opened his body, and removing his intestines, had stuffed him with dry grass instead, which would have injured him for life, but that a doctor of his own tribe found him, reopened him, removed the hay and put real intestines in its place. I know a woman in Gaboon who claims and evidently believes that she is constantly attended by several leopards, invisible to all others but herself. There is a man in Gaboon of whom the whole community believes that he frequently changes himself into a leopard in order to steal sheep and to devour a whole sheep at a meal. This he does also when he would avenge himself upon his enemies. This particular man denies that he has any such power. But sometimes men confess or claim that they themselves possess it; and in some cases they seem to believe it. A broken-hearted chief once told Du Chaillu how that his son, who had been his joy and hope, had been accused of killing two men of the town by turning into a leopard. The old man at first passionately defended his son. But to his horror, the son, stepping for-

ward, confessed the charge, and that he had turned himself into a leopard and killed the two men—he did not know why. With the chief's consent the son was burnt to death over a slow fire. And the sight of that horrible death was ever in the old man's eyes.

One day the Rev. Dr. Nassau (who relates this incident in his book, *Fetichism in West Africa*) arrived in a native village where he found an extraordinary commotion, the people panic-stricken with fear. Upon making an inquiry as to the cause, he was told that on the preceding day the wife of the chief had borne a son, the only son of the chief, who in his joy had this day made a great feast, which they were about to celebrate, when suddenly another woman of the village, carrying at her side a baby girl three months old, passed through the crowd straight to the house in which was the new-born boy, and exchanging the children, came out bearing the baby boy. Upon the loud protest of the people and a demand for an explanation she told them the following story :

This baby boy, she said, although borne by the chief's wife, really belonged to her ; while the baby girl which she had borne three months ago belonged to the chief's wife. She and the other woman, she said, were both witches. Until recently they had been intimate friends and had been accustomed to go off together in the night to witch-feasts and witch-dances in neighbouring villages. Their unborn babes they were accustomed to leave upon the grass while they joined in the dance. Her babe, she said, was a boy, and the other was a girl. But one morning the other woman, leaving the dance before her, took the male child and left the other, thinking that she would not know the difference. After that they had never gone out together ; a coolness had sprung up between them, and she had waited her time and kept her secret. In due time she had borne the baby girl, which really be-

longed to the chief's wife ; and now the chief's wife had borne the baby boy, which belonged to her.

The chief's wife stood dumb, as if in self-condemnation. No one doubted the story ; and the woman bore the child away.

The trial for witchcraft is by ordeal. In most cases poison is administered. If the accused dies or is seized with vertigo this is sufficient evidence of guilt ; if no such result follows, it is a sign of innocence.

The African believes in a God, who made all things ; but his idea of God is grossly anthropomorphic. God is a very big African chief with a great many wives. Some of their fables in which God figures are not repeatable. He regards men and women with contempt, and as a rule ignores them. I do not know that they ever worship Him. Their worship is directed to the innumerable spirits about them who infest the air, among whom are their ancestors. The spirits are generally disposed to do them harm ; but they may be placated, and their own dead may even be rendered favourable by certain ceremonies. But an incomparably greater number of spirits are always hostile, and the impulse of African worship is fear.

Here, then, is a state of mental degradation that to us looks almost like insanity. I have only touched upon the salient points of their belief. One can never convey to others any adequate impression of the stifling mental atmosphere of an African community, with its stagnation and torpor, depressing even the mind of the missionary and in some instances fairly threatening his faith. My experience of that atmosphere has been such that I have the deepest sympathy and compassion for traders and government officials living often solitary in such communities ; whose beliefs and morals are often not the result of personal convictions, but merely a reflection of the

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beliefs, traditions and moral restraints of the social community in which they have lived. Upon the beliefs of such men there is a power of gravitation in the mentality of an African community that acts like the Magnetic Mountain of the Arabian fable, which, as ships approached it from the sea, drew out of them every nail, bolt and rivet, and left them a wreck of floating timbers, to be flung at random upon the lonely shore or buried in its sand.

At the first approach the mind of the African seems utterly inaccessible. His mental powers are paralyzed; he has forgotten how to think. If his mental redemption is possible where must it begin?

One day long ago, when a fellow missionary and myself were together in the Bulu interior, a native young man, in response to our inquiry, expressed the African belief that the rainbow is a snake. It has the power—which many men also have—of making itself invisible. The missionary, reflecting that superstition is simply ignorance of nature and nature's laws, resolved to undertake immediately the boy's education. The sun was shining brightly, and the missionary, having sent the native to fetch a bucket of water, told him that he himself would then and there make a rainbow. He asked me to stand on the porch and throw the bucketful of water in a certain direction, while he took his stand on the ground with the boy by his side. Now it happens that in matters of science I have an inveterate inclination to be content with theory. I never attempted a practical experiment in my life that did not miscarry. Besides, everybody knows that a bucket is an exceedingly awkward instrument with which to take accurate aim. The water came down on the upturned faces of the two eager scientists. The black man has an abiding antipathy to the fourth element; and this native evidently regarded the

performance as a punishment for his unbelief in regard to the substance of the rainbow. He ducked his head and shouted: "I believe; I believe; master, please don't do it again."

Later in the day he might have been heard telling his friends not to let the white man hear them say that the rainbow is a snake—if they did not want a bucket of water thrown on them. So we made a conversion after the Mohammedan fashion. But that native must have wondered what might be the essential difference between the *reign of law* and the *law of rain*.

A million such experiments, even if perfectly successful, would not be worth while except as amusement; for the native mind is wrong not merely in particulars, but fundamentally. The idea of God must be injected into nature, as a basis for law, before a scientific attitude is possible. Only the idea of God can expel the multitude of spirits whose activities make of nature a haphazard warfare of conflicting forces. And how shall we convey this idea to the degraded mind of the African?

Of course we should change his idea of nature if we could persuade him of God's *unity*, and that nature, therefore, is the product of a single mind; His *spirituality*, and that He is therefore present everywhere, in nature and the hearts of men; His *holiness*, and that God and nature are therefore on the side of righteousness; His *love*, and that God and nature are therefore benevolent and sympathetic with man. But to talk to the African about God's attributes is to speak in an unknown tongue. And besides, God's personality is something more than the sum of His attributes, which no more make God, as some one has said, than arms and legs and head and trunk make my father. But we can present to the African mind the personal Christ—God incarnate—and the African heart responding can love Him; and loving Him he can

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know Him ; for love is more knowing than reason. The African is, above all, still capable of strong personal affection ; and looking into the face of Jesus he sees God—the *One God* of conscience—and learns to call Him *Father*, a word which even to the African mind implies love and care. He knows nothing of attributes, but like a child he can discern his Father's will.

God's fatherhood includes His care. And this relates God to nature, through which that care is largely exercised. His first lessons on nature the African learns not from science, but directly from Jesus. Jesus multiplies the loaves, and the value of the miracle for the African, and for us, is not the wonder of it, but the lesson that it is God who gives us our daily bread. Jesus stills the storm on Galilee and thus teaches that the Father is present in all storms and always rules the sea and the wind, which are not under the control of demons. Jesus heals the leper, and we learn His power over all disease, and that a loving will afflicts and heals. He raises Lazarus from the dead, and reveals that death is never in the hands of a malignant foe, but under the control of a sympathetic Power. The thought of the African is completely reversed by this knowledge of God. Nature is not the result of myriad spirits hostile to himself, but the product of one single mind, and its laws, the expression of a constant and loving Will. It is as if the forked lightning at which he trembles in the darkness should flash upon the storm-cloud the word *Father* ; and fear becomes faith. In Jesus the *One God* of conscience, the *Father*, becomes supreme over nature.

A certain native named *Toko*, of the Mpongwe coast-tribe, who had been for some years a Christian, went back into the interior among the Fang, preaching the Gospel. The Fang were notorious robbers, who at every opportunity plundered the cargo of traders as it passed in boats

up and down the river. While Toko was preaching one day, some one interrupting him said : " I don't believe that God is good, as you say. For why did He make this river so crooked that in order to reach the coast we have to travel nearly twice the straight distance ? "

" My friend," replied Toko, " God knew that you wicked Fang were going to live along this river and that you would plunder passing boats ; and He made the river crooked so that you can't see the boat coming until it is so near that you have not time to get out to it before it is past."

The wit aside, and however defective the teleology, observe the underlying attitude towards nature, and the fundamental change it implies. God is in nature, which is therefore under law, is sympathetic towards man, and working on the side of righteousness—a view that excludes and dooms fetishism and witchcraft. This simple man, and his fellow Christians with him, had the right basis for a scientific knowledge of nature.

It is truly astonishing how the African mind, despite its rude materialism, beginning with the idea of love, as revealed in Jesus, grasps ultimately the spirituality of God and the spiritual nature of true worship. One instance must suffice for illustration :

The women of West Africa, in preparing their food, bury it in the ground beside a stream for several days. A fellow missionary, one day examining an old woman who presented herself for baptism, and careful lest she might regard the water of baptism as a fetish, asked her a question regarding its significance, to which she replied :

" When I bury my food in the ground I mark the place. What use would the mark be if there were no food there ? Baptism is but the mark : God dwells in the heart."

## XIV

### THE MORAL DEGRADATION OF FETISHISM

**A**N African woman was one day walking through the forest to her garden when she found a little child who was apparently lost and was crying with hunger. She took pity on the child and immediately carried him back to her town where she comforted him and nursed him. The child remained a few days and then mysteriously disappeared. Immediately a dreadful plague broke out in the town and many people died and there was much mourning. Then they knew that it was not a real child whom the woman had found, but a spirit in the form of a child, who had appealed to the woman's pity and had lain on her bosom in order to bring death and desolation upon the people.

With such spirits, wanton and wicked, the African mind has filled the invisible world. The powers above him are hostile—all except the spirits of his immediate ancestors.

The former worship of snakes in Dahomy (nearly extinct by this time) throws a lurid light upon the African's conception of the powers above him. According to the belief of the Dahomians snakes were spirits incarnate. The Dahomians have a peculiar interest for Americans since the World's Fair of Chicago, where the chief attraction of the Midway Plaisance was an African village of real Dahomians, who regularly entertained a gazing throng with war-songs and war-dances and also scandalized feminine modesty. In one respect, however, the Chicago village had been modernized, as we shall see.

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When Leighton Wilson first went to Dahomy he found in each village a house in the middle of the street, provided for the "exclusive" use of snakes—there was probably not much difficulty in keeping it "exclusive" considering the deadliness of many African snakes. The snakes, Dr. Wilson tells us, were fed and better cared for than the inhabitants of the town. If they were seen straying away they were brought back. At the sight of them the people prostrated themselves upon the ground. It is not improbable that during the World's Fair Dahomians in far-away Africa were offering prayers to snakes for the safety of their friends in Chicago.

The snakes are spirits; and such are all the innumerable spirits which infest the air, excepting only a man's ancestors, who are more or less kindly disposed towards him. The African, therefore, is not merely, like the Mohammedan, the victim of inexorable fate; nor merely the plaything of nature. But he is subject to the caprice of evil spirits, or the object of their malignant hostility.

The following are chief factors in the demoralization of African character: *first*, the African's attitude towards the powers above him is that of fear, for he deems them hostile to him; *second*, his consequent attitude towards his fellow men is that of distrust, culminating in the belief in witchcraft; *third*, his conception of his own destiny is not hopeful nor ennobling: the future life is not better, but worse, than this life.

Against the hostility of the spirits a man's ancestors (especially his immediate father) afford him some protection. But even such protection is uncertain; for the ancestors themselves are very petulant and easily offended, and when they are displeased they are as much to be feared as other spirits. The favours which a son seeks from his father are not spiritual blessings of any kind, but temporal benefits. It cannot be said that the motive

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of this worship is entirely filial reverence. A father is much more useful dead than living ; and aged parents are sometimes even afraid that their sons will put them to death in order to procure the benefits which they could afterwards confer. The skull of the father is the commonest ancestral fetish, but not the only one.

An old chief, one day when I was visiting in his town for the first time, came and laid at my feet his most sacred fetish. It was contained in a small cylindrical box of bark made for the express purpose of holding this kind of fetish. The women, when they saw the box, screamed with fear and fled for their lives, putting their hands on their ears lest they should hear the old man's words and die. They are not supposed to know the contents of the box, and they are ready at any moment to take a solemn oath that they do not know, though as a matter of fact they know very well.

The following were the interesting if somewhat repulsive ingredients of this very powerful fetish. There was first, and chiefly, the brains of the old man's father, who had gained eminence and success according to Fang ideals. Some days after the father's death, when the body was partly decomposed, the son visited his grave at midnight—entirely naked—opened the shallow grave, severed the head from the body, and hung it up in a house, letting the decomposing brain drip upon some white chalk. To this he added one of the old man's teeth and a bit of his hair and cuttings of his nails, also a strip of flesh cut from the dead man's arm and dried over the fire. When the owner of such a fetish is about to engage in any considerable enterprise he rubs a portion of the brains upon his forehead and thereby possesses himself of all the serviceable qualities of the deceased—his adroitness in lying, his skill in cheating, his cleverness in stealing goods or other men's wives or in killing

his enemies. If he is going to talk a big palaver he places the strip of dried flesh in his mouth, and keeps it there all the time he is talking, that he may be eloquent and successful. A man possessing this kind of fetish, if he were going to a trading-house, would not hesitate to rub a portion of the brains and chalk upon his hand, so that in shaking hands with the white man it might pass to the white man's hand and make him benevolent. Some of them think that having thus put medicine on the white man's hand he will give them anything they ask.

The hostility of spirits other than ancestors is appeased in various ways. Arbitrary restraints and prohibitions are frequently imposed upon children soon after birth, to be observed through life. Such prohibitions usually have reference to a particular spirit which is always present with the inhibited person. The commonest prohibition is that of some particular food. Among my schoolboys there were always several who could not eat plantain, although it is the food that they like best. It was often difficult to provide other food for them; but they would have died rather than eat plantain. Women are prohibited from eating certain kinds of meat, or certain parts of an animal—usually (by a strange coincidence) the very parts that the men like best. There is scarcely a limit to the self-denial sometimes involved in the observance of these arbitrary restrictions.

Among the Fang the offering of human sacrifice to placate the spirits is not customary. Witchcraft probably usurps the place of this form of human sacrifice. But among the more highly organized tribes of the Calabar and the Niger, where individuals wield despotic power, multitudes have been offered in sacrifice to appease the hostility of the spirits: and they would still be offered but for the presence of foreign governments. It

took the English many years to suppress the annual sacrifice of human beings to the crocodiles of the Niger. I once had the pleasure of travelling with that great man and great missionary, Mr. Ramseyer (*Father Ramseyer*, all white men called him), a member of the Basle Mission, who for thirty years lived at Kumassi in the Ashantee Territory; and I heard from Mr. Ramseyer himself the story of Prempeh, that beastly king of Kumassi, whose fetish-trees were regularly watered with the blood of human beings; and who, when at length his lust for blood had become insatiable, had a slave put to death each night for his entertainment—and probably, also, to appease the hostility of the spirits. King Prempeh was finally captured by the English, and not long afterwards died in the prison at Sierra Leone.

Next to fear of the spirits the most demoralizing factor is the African's distrust of his fellow men. The one is a corollary of the other. The African, like other savages, before giving one a drink swallows a mouthful of it himself to prove that it is not poisoned. In some of the large tribes of the Niger, where a king *is* a king, it was the practice (until the English government interfered with custom) for a king, upon his accession to the throne, to put to death all his brothers and half-brothers. In one of those tribes the blood royal was held in such reverence that under no circumstances would they shed it; so they used to put the royal brothers to death by stuffing the mouth and nostrils full of cotton. It was a far more horrible death than cutting the throat; but it was respectful.

On one occasion, when my heart had been rent by the dreadful cruelty inflicted upon a certain woman whom I knew very well, who had been charged with witchcraft because of the death of her husband, I addressed the whole population of the town, and after holding forth for

some time in wrathful denunciation of their unreasoning suspicion, I asked why a man's wives must always be the first to be charged with his death. An elderly chief, rising to his feet, gently interrupted me, and using my native name, *Mote-ke-ye* (*Man-who-never-sleeps*), he said :

"Ah, Mote-ke-ye, I would like to ask one question : Are you a married man ?"

I was well aware, when I answered No, that the shrewd old man had routed me. The guilty men looked at one another with a relieved and peculiarly significant smile which said politely but unmistakably : "Then you are not qualified to judge us ; for you know nothing about the natural hostility of wives, and we know all about it."

A man's wives are the first to be charged with his death, even without evidence, because they are supposed to have a latent desire for it. As I have already said, much of the witchcraft of Africa is straight poison usually administered in food. Africa abounds with deadly poisons and many Africans are skillful in their use. Wives do the cooking, and so have the constant opportunity to inflict death by this powerful but invisible weapon. One often finds that one bad custom is nothing more than a pitiful attempt to correct another. And this may explain the custom of killing wives at the death of the husband. At any rate it tends to restrict a wife's use of poison and to inspire an earnest effort to keep her husband alive.

It has been estimated that, in those tribes that are beyond the restraints of foreign governments, nineteen out of twenty Africans die by violence. This accounts for the sparse population of Africa. For although the African race is prolific, and the land in most parts capable of sustaining a dense population, it is the most sparsely populated country in the world.

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Many of this number are killed in war, which is a chronic condition. Nothing is too trivial to occasion a war. The usual beginning, however, is the stealing of a woman by a man of another tribe or village. Following this, the people of the two villages wage an aggressive guerrilla warfare, killing each other at every opportunity, not sparing women or children. The war usually continues until on either side another woman is stolen by a third party and another war begins. Then the first war is closed: a great palaver is talked between the two parties in some neutral town; and after oceans of oratory it is usually agreed that the side that has done the most killing shall pay over to the other side a corresponding number of women and much goods, including a proper dowry for the woman first stolen.

One of the first scenes that I witnessed in Africa was that in which, at the end of a war, four women were thus delivered to the enemy. The people were all gathered together when the chief announced the names of the four women. Each woman, as she heard her name, sprang from the ground with a shriek and tried to escape into the forest; but several men were on hand to catch her. She struggled until they bound her. Then the next name was called, and we heard another shriek. Finally the four women were led away, all of them crying bitterly. In the town to which they were taken they would be given as wives to certain men, and soon they would begin to make the best of the situation, would probably form new attachments and forget the old.

Women are thus bought and sold. A man's wealth is reckoned by the number of his wives. On one occasion in a native town a conversation with the chief led me to preach on the future life; and I preached both heaven and hell. The chief evidently inferred that he was bound for the latter place. He asked me what I thought

about it. I told him candidly that I thought so too. For a moment he seemed troubled, and then his countenance brightened with relief, and he exclaimed: "I know what I'll do. I'll send my head wife in my place."

Belief in witchcraft is the extreme expression of mutual distrust. It is supposed that as many Africans are put to death for witchcraft as those who die in war. The African seems not to believe that there is any such thing as a natural death. Even when a man is killed in war some one is usually charged with having bewitched him; for it will be said that he wore a fetish for safety, but that a witch had broken the spell of the fetish. A witch's spirit is "loose from her body." In the night she leaves her body and goes off to foregather with other witches with whom she joins in wild and unspeakably wicked revels, during which they feast upon the "hearts" of people. The people whose hearts have thus been eaten sicken soon afterwards and die. A witch is always careful to return to her body before daylight. If the vacant body be found during her absence it would be wise to destroy it immediately.

When a number of deaths occur in close succession a council is held in the presence of the witch-doctor. When he announces witchcraft as the cause a panic ensues in which the people become fairly dehumanized with fear and a thirst for vengeance. Each one suspects everybody else. The witch-doctor sometimes names the guilty persons. And woe to any enemies that he may have in that town! Usually, however, they resort to the ordeal to find the guilty ones. The spectacle of such a panic is very revolting. The horrors of war, even at the worst, are never comparable to the horrors of witchcraft. It is the constant fear of the African, and his most powerful fetishes are those which protect him against it.

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Except in the vicinity of the foreign governments witches are put to death and always by cruel means, wives charged with witchcraft being buried alive with the dead body of the husband. In one town that I know ten women, wives of one man, were thus buried with him; in another town, twenty women. Their legs were broken before they were thrown into the grave.

Even cannibalism, regarded as the lowest reach of degradation, is not only a natural consequence of fetishism, but is one of its logical forms. I doubt whether, among the Fang, it is ever practiced on the mere impulse of hunger. It is rather the last desperate resort of fear seeking fetish protection. The strongest protection against an enemy in war is to eat one of their number. After that the enemy can do no harm and need not be feared; unless (always this same dreadful qualification)—unless some traitor in one's own town should break the spell even of this fetish by witchcraft.

The African is further demoralized by his idea of man's destiny. He believes in a future life. I never encountered a doubt on this subject. But his belief is not ennobling, nor a source of moral inspiration. Death is an unmitigated evil, and the dead are always wishing to be back in the flesh. The future does not hold rewards or punishments for the good or evil of the present life; nor has present goodness any future advantage. There, as here, to have a great many wives and plenty to eat are chief factors in happiness. They have big palavers there as well as here. Sometimes palavers left unfinished here are settled there. In some tribes (the Kru tribe, for instance) when smallpox or other scourge visits a town, and many people die about the same time, it is supposed that an unfinished palaver has been resumed in the other world and these persons were needed as witnesses.

It will be perceived that beneath all this moral degra-

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dation of the African, beneath his cruelty and licentiousness, there lies a degrading conception of man's nature. Man has no divine origin and no noble destiny ; therefore he has no intrinsic value and human nature has no inherent worth.

But to this seeming hopeless ruin of humanity Christ in His own person imparts a new conception, *first*, of the dignity of man's nature ; *second*, of the possibilities of his character ; *third*, of the greatness of his destiny.

In Jesus, God takes upon Himself this despised human nature, and reveals the divine character in a human life. That same life is at once a revelation of God and an example to men ; and without incongruity Jesus could say, in words perhaps the sublimest ever uttered in the ears of men : " Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Man, therefore, even the most degraded and the slave, is akin to God and the object of His tender regard. The light of this revelation extinguishes all minor differences between men ; a human soul is of more value than the whole world, and neither wealth nor power can add anything to a man's worth.

Much is added to this new conception of man when Jesus reveals in Himself the possibilities of human character. It was always a surprise to me to find how readily the African recognizes in Jesus the human ideal ; how he accepts Him as the true moral standard, by which henceforth he judges himself and realizes what he is and what he ought to be.

The great destiny of man which Jesus discloses seems not only credible, but even natural, in the light of man's kinship with God and the possibilities of human character. Instead of the poor African's fear of death and his degrading conception of the future life, Jesus sets before him a hope that thrills his heart with joy. Man has many present faults and frailties, but he does not

belong to the present. He is not a finality, but a possibility ; a possibility to be realized only in the perspective of an infinite future, in which death itself is but an incident, the end of nothing worth while ; and beyond it is the consummation of all our hopes, a consummation which language becomes rhapsody when it would describe.

Is it wonderful that this new conception of humanity should be morally transforming? that, for instance, it should impress even the African mind with the sanctity of human life?

Cannibalism disappears as soon as the Gospel becomes intelligible, and long before they accept it as individuals. A war arose between two villages, in a community where I had preached not more than a year, for the people had recently come from the far interior where cannibalism was commonly practiced. The town making the attack came on a very dark night, intending to set fire to the other town, which only required that the blaze be started in one place, the houses being so close that all must burn together. They were led by two young men whom I knew. While the rest of the party were hiding, these two, going forward, saturated the thatch roof of the first house with kerosene, and were striking a match, when the noise was heard by the man inside. He quietly arose, moving stealthily as a cat, opened the door, and discovered the two young men standing a few yards in front of him. He took deliberate aim and fired twice. One man fell dead instantly ; the other, frightfully wounded, reached his friends, who put him in a canoe and took him back to his town, where he died a few days later. I have said that one of the two fell in the street. A few years ago they would have eagerly devoured the body, both as a feast, and as a fetish protection against the enemy. The fetish belief still remained strong as ever, but they revolted

from the practice ; and having cut the body in pieces and boiled it, they smeared the grease upon their foreheads and breasts, hoping that it would thus avail for their protection. But they did not taste it. In former times they would actually boast of eating an enemy ; now these same people are ashamed to confess it, and it is the most offensive charge that one town can make against another.

The old chief to whom I have already referred, who laid at my feet the sacred fetish of his father's brains, told me how that he was persuaded to give it up by a neighbouring chief (one whom I had instructed) who had come to his town, not to make war and kill, as formerly, but in a spirit of peace, and had stayed many days in order to tell the people the things which he had recently learned. He had said that he and they must stop making war with each other ; that one God was Father of them all, who also loved them all ; that they must throw away their fetishes, entrust themselves to God's care, believe in His Son and do right ; and even if they suffered for it in this world there was a life to come in which they would be fully rewarded. This same chief, who was speaking to me, had had seven wives ; but at the instance of his new faith he put away six of them and refused to accept a dowry for those whom he put away.

The Christians among them refuse to accept the dowry for daughter or sister ; and polygamy of course is forbidden. Wars are less and less frequent ; and the sanctity of human life has taken such a hold of mind and heart that it must henceforth be a governing principle among them.

How completely the Gospel of Christ can transform the invisible world to the mind of the African and vanquish his abject and demoralizing fear of spirits was proved by the numbers of men who began coming to me, some of them from towns far away, in order to surrender the skulls of their fathers, the most potent fetish known to the African

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for protection against the hostility of the spirits. I found myself in possession of heaps of these uncanny skulls, and I did not quite know what to do with them. One day, a man, having heard that I was going to bring them to America, came to me in alarm to ask whether I had considered the possible consequences of confusion at the resurrection if the heads of these Africans should be transported to the other side of the sea.

The voluntary surrender of a father's skull is the strongest possible evidence of the sincerity of an African's faith in Christ, and his salvation from the paralyzing fear of spirits.

The disciples, that stormy night on Galilee, thought they saw a ghost, and in their fear of the ghost they forgot their fear of the tornado that was threatening to engulf them. But at the sound of a well-known voice, "It is I; be not afraid," their fear becomes joy, and Peter even cries out: "Lord, bid me come unto Thee."

The story is one that always appealed to the Fang of the Gaboon. For, in bringing their garden produce to the morning market, they must cross the bay at night in their frail canoes, and they all know what it means to be overtaken by the sudden fury of a tropical storm until they have despaired of reaching the land. And it is with the African as with the disciples, his fear of the supernatural is always greater than his fear of the natural, and confidence in Christ casts out all fear. So also in the last hour, when about to pass out of this life into the dread world of spirits, I have seen him meet death without fear. For he hears the voice of Jesus saying: "It is I; be not afraid," and he responds: "Lord, bid me come unto Thee."

## XV

### FETISHISM AND THE CROSS

**D**URING my study of the language of the Fang I was one day talking to a young boy and searching for a better word for *mercy* than the very vague word in general use. He was a bright lad, with beautiful eyes and frank manner. I said to him :

“A man was hunting in the forest, when he discovered a woman of a neighbouring town alone in her garden. He decided to steal her and add her to the number of his wives. He caught her and tied a bush-rope around her, and himself holding the end of it he made her walk ahead of him through the forest towards his town. On the way, the woman, recovering from her first fright, began to cry and to plead with him to let her go. She told him that she had three little children and that the youngest was sick and would probably die without its mother. The man for some time hardened his heart, but the woman continued to plead and to cry more bitterly. Then at last the man's heart was softened. He began to think that perhaps two wives were enough for the present ; and he let the woman go.

“Now, when he reaches his town and tells the people what he has done what will they say about him ?”

Promptly came the answer : “They will call him a fool.”

“Why will they call him a fool ?” I asked.

“Because he is not a real man. He has a soft heart like a woman's heart. All women are fools.”

“And how about small boys ?” I asked.

"Oh," said he, "small boys are very much like women ; but of course we will be real men when we grow up."

Not that the African is destitute of the instinct of humanity—by no means ; but a false ideal calls for the repression of his best instincts.

In the course of a war between two villages, in which I knew nearly all the people, a young man named *Minkoa*, a bright and rather manly young fellow, was one day out in the forest hunting when he was shot to death by a party who were in hiding near the path. *Minkoa's* sister was married to the very man who first shot him, and they had been intimate friends, like brothers in each other's regard, and had visited much together ; but the man did not know that it was *Minkoa* when he fired the shot in the dark forest. Having wounded him, and seeing him fall to the ground, he sprang forward to complete the work, and instantly recognized his friend *Minkoa*. The savage heart is never wholly savage. With a cry of grief he fell beside the wounded man and with his own body would have saved him from further injury ; but the rest of the party having come up, they dragged him back, flung him aside with a curse, and standing over *Minkoa*, fairly riddled his body with bullets. Compassion, or even natural affection, under such circumstances, is a weakness and must be suppressed as incompatible with what they regard as manly courage.

All heathendom suffers for want of a perfect human ideal. The first result is a variety of ideal and type in different nations and different religions. Not only does the Confucian type, the Mohammedan type, the Buddhist type, differ from the Christian type, but they also differ essentially from each other. In each, some one virtue, parental authority, for instance, or courage, occupies almost the entire foreground, while other virtues recede

in the perspective of character. In Africa virtue is almost identified with courage, and power is worshipped. Woman, therefore, who in all lands represents the gentler virtues—compassion, devotion, patience—is contemptible; and the child also; for where power is worshipped feebleness can have no claim. Woman, thus relegated to a place of inferiority and contempt, sinks to a lower level of degradation than the man. Cruelty is the characteristic of the men; licentiousness, of the women.

But notwithstanding the imperfection of his ideal the African is essentially moral. He knows the difference between right and wrong; he knows that it is wrong to lie and to steal. Sometimes I was disposed to doubt it; when he told me lies for no possible advantage, or when he committed wanton wickedness.

For instance, I ask a man what town he comes from, and he answers that he comes from Jamanen, when he really came from Atakama; and there is no conceivable reason why he should deceive me, except that he lies by preference. In the first days among the Bulu, before there was an established friendship between them and ourselves, when I have asked the road to a certain town the men have directed me the opposite way, and I have inferred the truth from the suppressed exclamations of the tittering women. A man steals a woman, instead of offering a proper dowry; and when I remonstrate, indignant that he should precipitate a war with all its bloodshed and suffering rather than pay a dowry, he amazes me by confessing that he expects to pay the dowry all the same—after the war. Why not pay it in the first place and save the lives of his people? And why does the African tell me a lie when the truth would serve his purpose better? Has he sunken to such a depth that "Fair is foul, and foul is fair"? So it sometimes seemed. But a more intimate knowledge of him always

compels one to abandon this theory. It is never the love of bloodshed that leads him to act thus, but an excessive admiration of courage. His attitude of distrust towards his fellow men has bred in him a disposition to secretiveness and deception, so that he lies even when there is no occasion, not from preference but from force of habit.

Let him discover that another has lied to him, or stolen from him, and he will resent it as readily and as naturally as ourselves. On occasion I have heard him preach a fairly good extemporaneous sermon on these subjects. In Old Calabar I was shown the leaf of a certain tree, the lower side of which is like sandpaper, and I was assured that it is frequently used upon the lips of persons convicted of lying—though I did not observe that trees of this kind were being rapidly defoliated by reason of this custom. The African lies in self-defense, and steals in the interest of success; but what he practices himself he condemns in others; for he knows that it is wrong.

Again, the universal practice of the *ordeal* is evidence of the moral nature of the African; though at first sight it would seem rather to indicate moral imbecility. Sometimes a hen is set on eggs and the accused person is adjudged guilty or innocent according as the greater number of chickens hatched are male or female. This is a mode of trial for less serious offenses. More commonly in the case of witchcraft a mild poison is administered to the accused in a drink. Sometimes it only produces vomiting and does him no harm. But if he is seized with vertigo and staggers, he is adjudged guilty.

Since the establishment of foreign governments it is seldom that a white man is allowed to witness this ordeal; but in earlier days they witnessed it frequently. Du Chaillu tells of such a trial at which he was present,

in a town near Gaboon. There lived in the town a woman, Ogondaga, an unusual woman among her people, he says; the one also who had kept his house and cooked his food and had been exceedingly kind to him. A number of deaths occurred in the town, and when the witch-doctor was consulted he announced witchcraft as the cause. The usual panic ensued. The terrified people, exclaiming, "There are those among us who eat people," ran through the streets with drawn swords, athirst for blood. The witch-doctor named three persons as possible witches; and last among them he named Ogondaga. As they dragged her from her house towards the river she caught sight of her white friend and piteously begged him to save her. The lonely white man, pale and trembling, looked on, but could do nothing. They made her drink the poison. There was a moment's terrible suspense; then she was seized with vertigo and staggered. But even before she fell they sprang upon her with savage yells, cut her body to pieces, and with curses flung it piece by piece into the river. And yet I am citing the ordeal as evidence of a moral nature!

The roots of certain shrubs, the bark of certain trees, and, above all, the notorious Calabar bean are used as ordeal poisons. Sometimes both the accused and the accuser are compelled to submit to the ordeal. In at least one African tribe, when one person charges another with certain serious offenses they are both (accused and accuser) tied to stakes some distance apart, on the brink of the river in the neighbourhood of crocodiles, and whichever of the two is seized first is adjudged guilty. The other is then set free.

The ordeal is a form of judicial trial in which supernatural aid is relied upon to take the place of evidence and to determine guilt or innocence. We must not for-

get that the ordeal was a medieval practice in Europe ; and that our fathers were required to prove their innocence by dipping their hands into boiling water, or carrying a red-hot iron nine paces. But our fathers believed in a righteous God, and when evidence was wanting the ordeal was a direct appeal to His judgment. It is very different, and more strange, to find the African relying upon the ordeal, who does not believe in a righteous God. The God of African belief made the world ; but in character He is no better than the Africans themselves ; and, moreover, he is a God afar off and inactive, while the spirits who are near and active are also evil and hostile.

The principle of the African ordeal is that there is an eternal connection between guilt and retribution ; and knowing of no righteous God to execute vengeance, they attribute wrath to the dumb forces of nature ; these, they conceive, are in league against the wrong-doer and will execute vengeance. The belief is the more impressive because it is directly contradicted by the facts of experience. Fire burns the innocent ; the lightning-stroke is no respecter of persons ; the fury of the tornado is not partial to the good. And yet the belief persists. It persists because of the irrepressible instinct that wrongdoing deserves punishment, and that somewhere at the heart of the universe there is a moral power that connects guilt and retribution.

The same instinct accounts for the sleepless Nemesis and the whips and scorpions of the Furies of ancient mythology. There is a peculiar and striking instance of it in the Scriptures : Paul, having been shipwrecked on the island of Melita, gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire which the natives had kindled ; but a viper, by reason of the heat, came out and fastened on his hand. Then the natives said one to another : " No doubt this

man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live."

But when, instead of falling dead suddenly, they saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

One still night, as we lay at anchor in the middle of the broad river, amidst profound darkness, a deep-voiced man related to the crew a story of how a certain man, whose father and sisters had been killed by another man in a tribal war, not being able to avenge himself, at last "threw his face on his enemy." It is not necessary to repeat the unpleasant details of how this is done; but in many tribes they believe that where a great wrong has been unavenged it really can be done, and, intentionally or otherwise, it illustrates in a gruesome manner a principle of remorse of which some suppose that the African is incapable. Ever after the man threw his face on his enemy the enemy saw that face. It haunted him in the midst of all his joys, made his sorrows the heavier, and poisoned all the pleasures of his life. Fetishes, prayers, incantations were all in vain; he still saw it, saw it alike in the darkness and the light, and saw it always. At last, when madness threatened him because of this haunting face, he killed himself to escape from it. But it is very doubtful whether he would escape it even in death; for there are those who say that a face thrown upon a man will continue to haunt him in the next life even as in this.

Again, even more clearly does the African prove that he is essentially moral by the ceremonies which he has instituted for the relief of a sense of guilt. I once witnessed a peculiar ceremony of this kind in a native town. A series of dire misfortunes, which had exhausted the usual resources of fetishism, led them at length to search their own hearts for the cause. By some means it was

concluded that the infidelity of the wives of the town was the cause of their calamities. Thereupon a fetish medicine was prepared in a large bucket. An individual who played the part of priest was hidden in a green booth in the middle of the street. He was supposed by the women to be a spirit, and not a human being. He spoke in a false voice that was inhuman enough for any spirit. The women as he called them by name, one by one, approached and sat down on a seat a few yards from the booth. The "spirit" within the booth held one end of a rope of vine, while the woman seated without held the other. Then he asked her whether she was guilty of the sin that had wrought so much evil. The women believed that the spirit already knew their guilt or innocence, and they were afraid to lie. They all confessed their guilt in the hearing of the people—probably every woman in the town. Then an assistant, at the command of the priest, dipped a bunch of grass into the medicine and sprinkled it upon the guilty, thereby removing the curse.

Since that time they have all heard of the blood that was shed on Calvary ; and by its sprinkling some of those same women, I trust, have been cleansed from a guilty conscience.

Blood itself is often used in these ceremonies ; the fresh blood of fowls, or of sheep or goats. In such a ceremony the people are seated on the ground, one behind another, and the priest passing along pours the blood over their heads and shoulders. To most of them it is a mere ceremonial and removes the curse without reference to the heart. Such a scene often recalled the observation of George Adam Smith, that the essence of heathenism is not idolatry but ritualism. Many of them shrink from the blood, lowering their heads to keep it off their faces and evidently desiring as little of it as possible. But occasionally one may see a woman welcome it with eager,

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upturned face, and eyes of infinite and pathetic longing ; in the spirit of that disciple who said : " Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

" Out of the depths," said the psalmist—" Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord." And must we not believe that this inarticulate cry from the abysmal depths of the poor African woman's darkness and degradation is heard by the attentive ear of Him who sitteth upon the throne of the heavens and is very nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart ?

In nothing else does the African reveal his essentially moral nature more than in his immediate recognition and acceptance of the character of Jesus as the human ideal ; although it is an ideal that traverses all his former conceptions, that subverts those ideas which are the basis of his dearest social customs, and condemns utterly that conduct which has been his very boast. Jesus is so immediately understood by the African that we are often asked whether Jesus was a black man. He is understood by every tribe and nation, because He unites in Himself the ideals of all. He also unites in Himself individual qualities of seeming incompatibility. In Him the most masculine qualities are united with those which are usually regarded as feminine, such as gentleness, patience, devotion. Christ redeems woman from oppression and bondage by rescuing from contempt those virtues in which she excels, and even giving them preëminence. He is the ideal of woman as well as man.

But that which concerns us just now is the strange fact that the African immediately accepts the new ideal. He recognizes the character of Jesus as the authoritative standard even when he refuses to conform to it ; and its authority is based wholly on his perception of its intrinsic superiority. The African finds in Jesus the complete definition of his own conscience. We shall not find a

better explanation of this fact than that of the Bible ; that he was made in the image of God and has not forgotten his origin.

If this depiction of the mind and heart of the African be true, it will be almost a foregone conclusion that the gospel which inspires his faith and becomes the power of God unto his salvation is the gospel of the cross and the atoning Saviour. Those who are called to preach Christ to the most degraded of mankind are ever in accord with the persistent instinct of the Church in all ages, embodied in the beautiful tradition that the spear which wounded our Saviour's side on Calvary had henceforth the power to heal every wound that it touched.

This gospel of the atonement, in the first place, relieves his sense of guilt. His sense of guilt is very vague, indeed ; but the ceremonies which he has instituted for its removal are the most concrete expression of his moral nature. He knows nothing of the theological implications of the atonement, nor does he understand the philosophy of his own salvation ; but he knows that the crucified Christ satisfies his heart and relieves his conscience. For man is always greater than his reasoning faculty, and sometimes when it is impotent he still may know the truth by faith direct. The justice of vicarious atonement is not incredible to the African because he already has the idea. In common with most oriental races he has an idea of human solidarity which the occidental has lost (though he is regaining it) by reason of his excessive emphasis upon individualism. The African represents the opposite extreme. Each member of a family or tribe may be held justly accountable for any misdeed of any other member. If, for instance, in conducting a caravan through the forest one of them should desert, it would be in strict accord with African justice to shoot all the remaining members of that man's tribe. White men (in-

cluding some missionaries) have occasionally won a reputation for generosity by foregoing their rights in this respect. The human mind will never exhaust the divine mystery of the cross; but somewhere in its neighbourhood society will probably find the true mean between the two extremes of individualism and social solidarity. The voluntary sacrifice of Christ as our representative and its procurement of our pardon is credible to the African and relieves his sense of guilt.

Again, it is Christ as the atoning Saviour who secures his repentance. Nowhere else but at the cross have men united the ideas of holiness and love, God's hatred of sin and love of men. In heathen religions, when love is attributed to God, as in some forms of Hinduism, He is indulgent and indifferent to sin; when holiness is attributed to Him, as in Mohammedanism, He is remote and indifferent to men, because they are sinful. And even the Pharisees were scandalized, not understanding how that Jesus, while professing to be holy, could receive sinners and eat with them. But the atoning death of Jesus, in which the divine goodness is concentered, unites holiness and love, hatred of sin and love of righteousness, and makes them inseparable.

Those who have acquired an intimate knowledge of the mind and heart of the heathen know that it is the consequences of sin, rather than sin itself, which they would escape. There is but little real abhorrence of sin. And the missionary feels instinctively that to proclaim to such an audience a gospel of forgiveness on a basis of repentance alone, without either penalty or atoning sacrifice, would only give license to indulgence, and make repentance itself impossible. The atonement of Christ, while offering free pardon, impresses even the mind of the African with the enormity of sin and the impossibility of pardon to the impenitent.

And again, Christ the atoning Saviour is the highest impulse to self-sacrificing service. The love of the atonement is more than the love of complacency. The atonement is love actualized as service.

It seems to me one must have lived among the heathen in order to realize how this principle of self-sacrifice stands over against the world's principle of self-assertion. It is claimed, and with some truth, that Buddhism also has this principle of self-sacrifice. But, according to that religion, self-sacrifice leads to death, practical annihilation, which is therefore more desirable than life. In Christianity self-sacrifice leads to more abundant life and is the way not to a grave but to a throne. In Revelation a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world is seated upon the throne and rules: self-sacrifice is the principle not of death but of life, the way to power and glory; and this is not merely a temporal discipline, but an eternal principle—"from the foundation of the world."

The African has a capacity for devotion not surpassed in the world. And he easily construes Christian duty in terms of service.

Ndong Koni was one of the first of the Fang Christians. He chose Christ early in life, and his mind was as completely purged of fetishism as was his heart of heathen cruelty. He was gentle and affectionate; and through all the years in which he was my constant companion, in frequent sickness, and in toils long and hard, I received from him so much kindness and affection that my heart still grows tender when I think of him. Ndong Koni was accounted very poor because he had no sisters. A man gives his sisters in marriage, and with the dowry which he obtains he procures for himself as many wives as he has sisters. Ndong Koni had not even one sister; and since he would not elope with another man's wife

his domestic future was a problem which neither he nor his friends could solve. Therefore, when he came to the mission and asked for work, I supposed that he had resolved to procure a dowry by working for it—which would require the labour of years. But I found, when I visited his town, that, with only the assistance of an old uncle, Ndong Koni had built a little church in his town; and in order that it should be far better than any house in town they had decided that it should have real carpenter-made windows and doors swinging on real hinges. This grandeur would be very costly, and Ndong Koni had sought work at the mission in order to earn money to pay for it. From that time, as long as I remained in Africa, he never left me, except for an occasional brief interval. He rose from one position to another until he was captain of the crew of the *Dorothy*, and, finally, a catechist. Many of the towns near Ndong Koni's home were new, the people having come recently from the interior. I was the first white man to visit most of these; but I always found that Ndong Koni had preceded me and was the first missionary.

One of Ndong Koni's converts was Onjoga, a remarkable man, who afterwards became an elder in the Fang church. Onjoga had reached middle age when he became a Christian, and for a long time he was the only Christian in his town. It was a peculiarly bad town. Soon after his conversion he came to the mission to ask me if I could send a teacher to his town; for, he said, he would like to learn to read the Bible that he might instruct his people. I had no teacher whom I could send; but Onjoga was so determined that I concluded to keep him at Baraka for a while and give him special instruction. He remained several months during which I taught him daily; and half of each day he worked in the yard to earn the price of his food.

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He winced perceptibly when I told him that the only work which I could give him at the time was that of cutting grass. This is the one kind of work, above all others, that the African soul abhors. The coarse, rank grass grows with astonishing rapidity in that moist, hot climate. But for reasons of health it must be kept down. A lawn-mower is useless : it is cut with a short, straight cutlass—the English matchet—and in wielding this cutlass one must stoop to the very ground. It is extremely hard work, and regarded also as peculiarly menial. To keep half a dozen natives working at it steadily for half a day is the final test of the white man's power of command in Africa.

One day I set the crew of the *Evangeline* at this work. Makuba, the captain, was very resentful ; and the next day when I ordered him to get the boat ready for a missionary journey he was still resentful—so much so that he could scarcely walk. In answer to my stare of amazement at his snail pace he informed me that he had rheumatism as a result of cutting grass. Makuba was an incomparable boatman and a faithful friend ; but in that mood he was sufficiently exasperating to demoralize both crew and missionary and to make the heathen rage. When we got well under way, and the *Evangeline* had spread her white wings to the wind, the other men began to eat ; but Makuba would not even touch his food. At length I said to him :

“ Makuba, I am very sorry that your rheumatism is so bad you can't eat ; for I am going to have a fried chicken for my dinner and I was expecting to give you a portion of it—about half, perhaps.”

I had already learned that the chicken is the one African fetish whose potency survives all changes. Makuba's countenance was a study ; but he replied :

“ Mr. Milligan, chicken no be same as other chop. I

be fit to eat chicken." (Makuba was not a Fang, so he always addressed me in English.)

"But do you think it would cure your rheumatism?" I asked; "I am not sure that I can spare it unless it is going to effect a complete cure."

Makuba assured me that fried chicken was the specific for his kind of rheumatism. And he was right; for it cured him completely. We had a successful missionary tour, Makuba doing extra service at every opportunity and singing as he held the helm.

The reader will understand, therefore, that Onjoga, the Fang Christian, a man of middle age, and of real importance in his town and tribe, did an extraordinary thing when he consented to cut grass that he might stay at Baraka and be instructed in the Christian religion. He was distinctly a man of brains. Before I left Africa I saw him stand before a large audience and read a chapter from the Gospel of Matthew; and he read it well. It was he, by the way, who, after one of our missionary tours, first gave me my African name, *Mote-ke-ye: Man-who-never-sleeps*.

While Onjoga was living at Baraka I often took him as one of the boat-crew in my work of itinerating. On one occasion, after a long journey and a futile effort to reach a certain town during the afternoon, we lost our way; for there was a network of small rivers. We could neither find that particular town nor any other. Our predicament became serious when darkness approached and the air became dense with mosquitoes. At length we espied a canoe in the distance with several persons in it. We pulled as fast as possible in order to overtake them; but they evidently thought that we were pursuing them and they tried to escape from us. Then Onjoga, rising in the boat and calling to them as loud as he could yell (loud enough to be heard at any finite distance) told them that

we were lost and that we would like to go with them to their town for the night. Having observed my helmet, they knew that there was a white man in the boat and they were afraid, and refused to take us to their town; for the French had recently burned some of their towns. Onjoga assured them that I was not a government officer. Then they asked who I was.

Onjoga shouted back: "He is a missionary."

Across the distance came the question: "What is a missionary?"

Then Onjoga, shouting with all the strength of his powerful lungs, gave them an outline of my work, a brief character-sketch of myself, and a rapid synopsis of the Gospel which would have laid the world under lasting obligation if I could have preserved it. Much to my surprise it had the desired effect. They waited for us and took us to their town, one of considerable size of which I had not before known the existence. We spent the night there and preached to the people. In the evening, when all the people were assembled, one of their own number started a Fang hymn (one that I had translated) in which they all joined, to my astonishment. Then they sang another, and another. The explanation was that Ndong Koni had frequently visited the town in order to teach them.

Onjoga's wife, Nze, was a great trial to him after he became a Christian. At length he told me that he was going to put her away and asked me to come to his town and judge the palaver. For he wished me to know that he was fully justified. I went to his town and held a great palaver and heard many witnesses. I listened half a day to the very unpleasant story of Nze's infidelity. Onjoga said that he did not care so much about it before he became a Christian, but now it was revolting to him and intolerable. After a long talk with Nze I asked On-

joga to take her back once more. He was at first very unwilling. I said :

"I know it is hard ; but she promises to do right in the future ; and besides, if you put her away you will probably marry some one else just as bad ; for they are all alike, or nearly so." This was before there were any conversions among the women.

"I know it," he replied ; "but I shall procure a very young wife and I am going to beg you to take her to Baraka and raise her for me."

His heart was so set upon this project that I had some difficulty in persuading him that training wives for other men was not exactly my specialty.

At last he consented to take Nze back once more. "But," he said, "I know she will not keep her promise."

He was right. It was only a little while until Nze was living as badly as ever. He put her away and remained single for some time. Then he married a woman who had become a Christian under his teaching, and they lived most happily together. Shortly before I left Africa I went to his town and baptized their infant daughter. That service is still a sweet memory.

It was not a great move for Nze. She married a man in the same town and lived next door to Onjoga. Onjoga was a natural leader of men, and the influence of his life transformed that town. Each time I visited him he told me of men and women who had renounced their fetishes, together with their cruelties and adulteries, and had confessed the Christian faith. But the last time I visited his town he came walking down the street to greet me, leading by the hand none other than Nze, whom he presented saying : "She is now a Christian ; and she is in the class that I am teaching." When I left Africa Nze was still a faithful member of Onjoga's class.

He was a man of evangelistic fervour. He regarded

himself as a debtor to all his people to make known the gospel of Christ crucified, which was always the burden of his preaching. There were but few towns on the Gaboon where his voice was not heard. Ndong Koni was gentle and winsome ; but Onjoga was aggressive and forceful. They represented extreme types ; and there are other types among the Fang equally pronounced. For Christ lifted up upon the cross draws all men unto Him.

Onjoga's own town instead of being one of the worst became one of the best towns on the Gaboon. In the early days when I first visited it the characteristic sound which greeted me as I approached it (usually in the early night) was perhaps the bitter cry of a woman who was being tortured for witchcraft ; or the uncouth howling of a leopard-man whom women and children may not see lest they die ; or the weird wail of their mourning for the dead ; or the noise of war-drums and the savage shouts of warriors who were keeping an expected enemy warned that they were on the watch. Such were the sounds that ascended in the darkness like the smoke of their torment. A few years later, in that town one would hear every evening at a regular hour the people, young and old, singing hymns, and singing them as they ought to be sung, from the heart. Nor was there any cry of torture, nor any howl of a leopard-man, nor beating of war-drums, nor any other sound that would strike fear into the heart or quench the laughter of children at play.

## XVI

### MISSIONS AND SOCIAL PROGRESS

THE "untutored child of nature" whom we meet in the pages of Rousseau and Cooper, the "noble savage" of sentimental fiction, is not the savage of missionary literature.

Henry George, while repudiating the sentimental view, contrasts the personal independence of the savage with the dependence of the labourer of civilization whose skill is specialized until his labour becomes but an infinitesimal part of the varied processes which are required to supply even the commonest wants. The following is Mr. George's attractive picture of the savage :

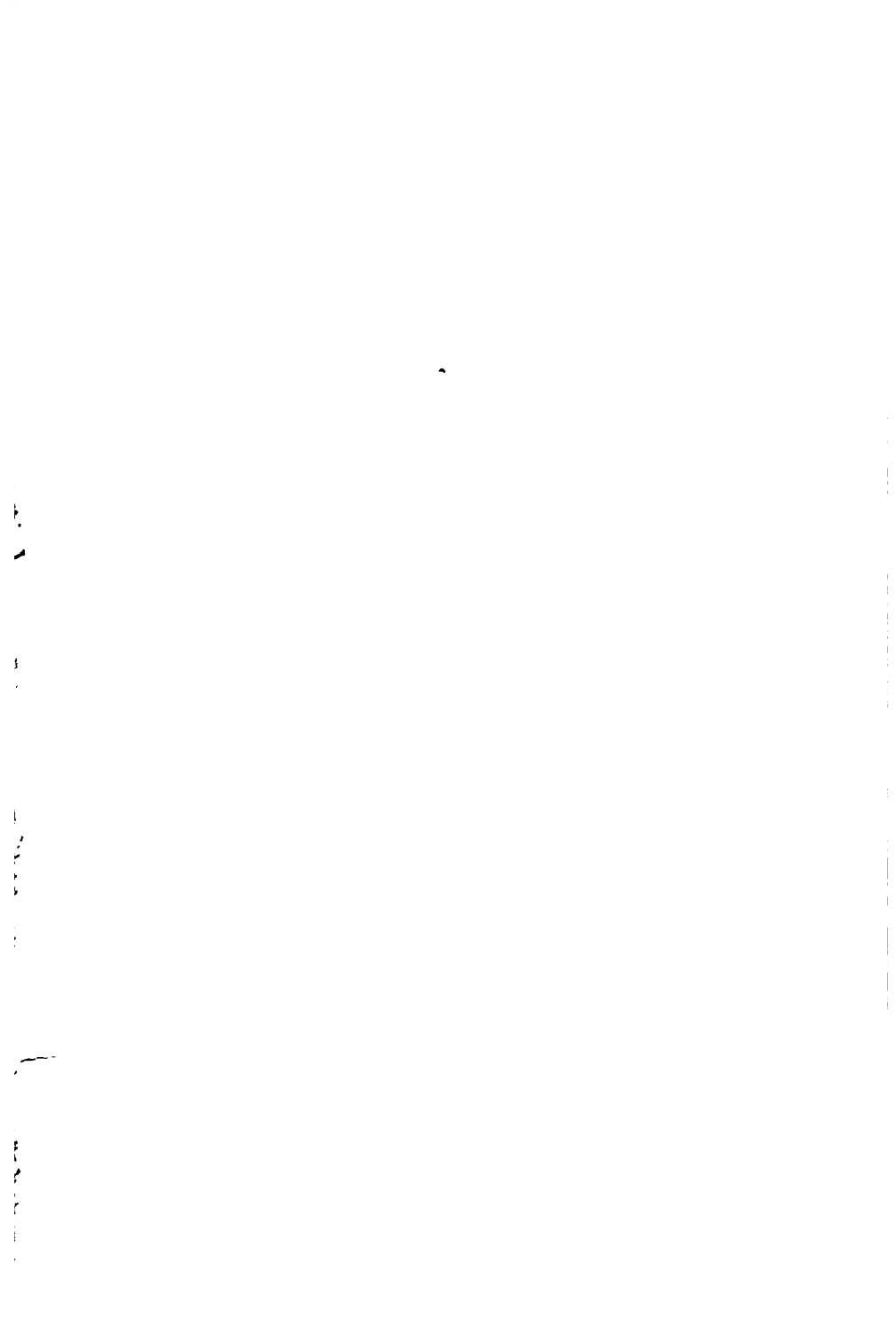
"The aggregate produce of the labour of a savage tribe is small, but each member is capable of an independent life. He can build his own habitation, hew out or stitch together his own canoe, make his own clothing, manufacture his own weapons, snares, tools and ornaments. He has all the knowledge of nature possessed by his tribe—knows what vegetable productions are fit for food, where they may be found; knows the habits and resorts of beasts, fishes and insects; can pilot himself by the sun or the stars, by the turning of blossoms or the mosses on the trees; is in short capable of supplying all his wants. He may be cut off from his fellows and still live." <sup>1</sup>

This personal independence is a fact and it is one that appeals strongly to the imagination of those who see the savage at a distance and who think of him only as *primitive*, instead of savage. His state seems closely akin

*Progress and Poverty*, p. 256.



SEVERAL STRIDES TOWARD CIVILIZATION.  
A Group of Bulu.



to that social condition, described by an ancient poet, in which law, commerce, literature, science and religion are not specialized, but implicit in the daily life of each individual. Man loves the exercise of liberty for its own sake, regardless of aim and consequence. It seems to be a condition of manhood—of moral spontaneity and development. But the personal independence of the savage (when we see him not with the imagination but with the eyes) is the expression of his brute selfishness. Even his wife has no share in it; nor anybody else if he can help it; for the desire for liberty is but a step from the desire for power. There is no word in his vocabulary to express the idea of justice. And when we pass from his social condition to the inward man, himself, we find him the victim of a thousand abject fears and cruel tyrannies that enslave him.

Mr. George L. Bates, a naturalist, who spent several years among the Fang and gave me both sympathy and assistance in missionary work, tells a story of a Fang feud, the last incident of which took place a few months before I left Africa. I repeat the story told by Mr. Bates, almost in his own words :

Nzwi Amvam, a man of the Esen clan, had been killed by Bibane, chief of the Amvom clan, the enemies of the Esen. After some days a palaver was held to divide the dead man's estate and decide to whom his seven widows should be given. These seven women were seated on the ground in the middle of the street, while the assembled company, a miscellaneous crowd from that and surrounding villages, were seated on either side of the street in the shade of the low projecting palm-leaf roofs. The important men of the clan sat in the open palaver house at the end of the street. After much oratory it was agreed that Ngon, eldest son of Nzwi Amvam, should receive two of his father's wives, the other five being distributed among

the near relations. Then the palaver broke up to be followed in the evening by a great dance with much drumming.

When young Ngon lay down that night he considered that he had become an important man. Before his father's death he had one wife; now he had three. He had also received from his father's estate a store of iron rods and spearheads sufficient to purchase another wife. And, besides, he had a gun—the only one in his town—which, it is said, had come from the land of white men, beyond the great sea. He was in a fair way to become a great man. But Ngon was not happy. He was thinking of the man who killed his father; he was thinking of Bibane, and a passion stronger than the desire for wealth and greatness took possession of him. He felt *olun*, that is *shame, grief, rage*, an intolerable thirst for *revenge*—he felt *olun*.

Many moons Ngon waited his opportunity. Many times he had his men conceal themselves along the forest paths that led to the village of the Amvom; but the enemy was too wary for them. At length, the day came that Ngon levelled his gun from behind a tree at the son of his enemy, who was passing alone and unsuspecting, and sent a rude fragment of an iron pot tearing into his chest. The wound was mortal. In a few hours they heard the wailing of the women of old Bibane's village. Then the death-drum of the Amvom boomed through the forest and Ngon heard it with fierce delight. The *olun* was removed from his breast. And, besides, he was now a great man beyond question, for he had killed an enemy with his own hands.

In Ngon's village, however, when the shouting was over they reflected that Bibane was a man to take revenge with interest; and the Amvom were a powerful clan. It was the beginning of a period of alarms. Often at dead

of night the whole town was terrorized when the cry was raised, "The Amvom are coming!" For many moons the women never went to the plantations except when armed men went before and behind them in the path. Ngon himself usually headed the company. He also kept strict watch of the gloomy border of the forest surrounding the plantation while his wives dug cassava and filled their baskets, or cut bunches of plantains and bananas to carry home. But as time passed and the Amvom did not appear Ngon began to keep less strict watch.

One day his most faithful wife, young Asangon, went to a plantain grove under her care, far from the village, and came back reporting other enemies to be watched besides the Amvom. The plantain stocks were twisted and eaten off and all the bushes around trodden flat. Elephants! A few nights and their depredations would cause famine in the village. So with some of his young men, Ngon went to the place, built a booth of palm branches, prepared a bed, gathered fuel for a fire, and returned to the village. At dusk he set out for the plantain grove, accompanied by his wife, Asangon, and their little son, whom Asangon carried astride her right hip, sitting in a wide strap of monkey-skin which was slung over her shoulder. Ngon walked ahead with his gun and a gum torch lighted to show the way and to frighten evil spirits in the dark forest. They were going to sleep in the booth among the plantains for the purpose of scaring away the elephants. As he set out his white-haired mother cautioned him to look out for the Amvom. "They're a crafty lot," she said, "and want to cut your throat and eat you." But the young man declared that Bibane's people were far away on a hunt.

Four nights they slept among the plantains and scared the elephants away. It was noticed also that Asangon seemed to enjoy going out thus, and spending the night

with only her husband and her baby. It had probably never occurred to her to form a distinct wish to be Ngon's only wife, but her happiness in the present arrangement was none the less keen, and was made all the keener by the apprehension that it would not last long.

The fourth morning, as they went through a bit of uncleared forest, suddenly at a turn in the path a spear whizzed past Ngon, and he saw among the trees the face of Bibane and the Amvom. He raised his gun and pulled the trigger; but the white man's weapon failed him this time. The powder flashed in the pan and that was all. At the same moment hearing a cry behind him, he turned to see his little son pierced with the spear that had missed himself, and dying in his mother's arms. The Amvom sprang out upon him; and it was all he could do to break from them and escape into the forest, leaving his wife a captive and his son dead. It was now in the Eesen villages that the wailing was heard; while there was dancing and drumming among the Amvom.

But Ngon Nzwi again felt *olun*. In the dusk of the following morning while the people were still in their beds, his voice was heard in the street, rousing them from their sleep.

"People of this village," he cried, "descendants of Ndong Amvam, who first came from the east and founded this settlement, I am Ngon Nzwi, son of Nzwi Amvam, son of Amvam Ndong, son of Ndong Amvam; I am head man of this village. Bibane of the Amvom killed my father, Nzwi Amvam, and now he has killed my child, captured my wife, and tried to take my own life. May that man of the family of Amvam who fails to help me in my revenge see his own people dead corpses! And my revenge will not be complete until I have eaten the flesh of the arm that threw the spear yesterday."

The gruesome threat was literally fulfilled. Many

seasons passed before the opportunity came ; but it came at last and the dead body of Bibane lay at his feet. His wives knew what was to be done with the right arm and they prepared the feast for Ngou. Some of his closest friends joined him in it, but there was no dancing or story-telling, and not many words were spoken about it by his people. For the memory of it weighed upon their spirits.

The personal independence of the savage does not constitute the *simple life* of our idealizing imagination. There still are foes without and *olun* within,—not to speak of hostile spirits and the fear of witchcraft.

Guizot in his *History of Civilization* defines civilization as *progress*, the progress of *society*, and the progress of *individuals* ; the melioration of the social system and the expansion of the intellectual and moral faculties of man. And these two elements, according to Guizot, are so intimately connected that they reciprocally produce one another. When we speak of the authority of example and the power of habit we admit, perhaps unconsciously, that a world better governed, a world in which justice more fully prevails, renders man himself more just.

That is true ; but society is moralized by ideas ; and ideas must work through the brains and the arms of good and brave men. Therefore Christianity addresses itself primarily to the individual ; though it does not ignore social conditions. It is easier to love men, especially alien men, in the mass than to love them individually. Rousseau, it is said, loved mankind but hated each particular man ; and there are those among us who would fight for the freedom of the Negro race but would not walk a block with an individual Negro. The love of Jesus is an aggregate of individual and personal loves. It was *one sheep* that went astray whom the shepherd followed weary and footsore till he found it ; it is *one sinner* over whose re-

turn there is joy in heaven. The missionary is first of all an evangelist, not a social reformer. Christianity aims at the redemption of man, first in his individual character, and then in his associate life.

Christianity is so intricately interwoven with our own civilization, its influence upon our characteristic institutions is so subtle, that it is not easy to say where its beneficence begins or ends; and many among us are constantly attributing its social effects to other causes. But introduced into Africa its power as a social force at once becomes obvious. It comes in contact with a social condition which presents the extremest contrast to that of our civilization, a condition which is hostile at almost every point to the spirit of Christianity and that has remained unchanged probably for ages; it comes as an evangelistic agency, not working directly for social reforms; but within the lifetime of one man society is transformed almost beyond recognition by the abolishment of social evils, the implantation of institutions of education and philanthropy, and the beginning of all that is highest and best in our civilization.

Let us not exaggerate the difference between civilization and savagery. It is always necessary to check the dramatic instinct, which for the sake of a telling contrast would set the worst aspects of heathen barbarism over against the best or even ideal aspects of Christian civilization. Civilization is still far from perfect and savagery is not wholly savage.

The interval between civilization and the savage state is never so great as that between the latter and an animal state. No animal uses fire; though I recall that Emin Pasha declared that he had witnessed a procession of African monkeys carrying torches;—but we didn't see it. No animal cooks its food; no animal wears clothing; no animal makes either tools or weapons; no animal

breeds other animals for food ; no animal has an articulate language. Moreover without a certain degree of order, intelligence and justice, human society, even that of the savage, could not continue to exist.

But one going from America to Africa is impressed only by the contrast ; and he necessarily reflects upon it and seeks to define it.

The first contrast between civilized society and that of Africa which impresses one is that of *interdependence* and *independence*. I lived very simply in Africa, and yet the whole world contributed to my simple fare. On my table there was butter from Denmark, milk from Switzerland, rice from India, sugar from Cuba, coffee from Brazil, dates from Arabia, other fruits from France or from California, vegetables from England, meats from America—and so forth. I did not even know where the wheat was grown from which my bread was made ; nor whether the cattle that supplied beef had first grazed in Argentina or on the prairies of the Canadian Northwest. It was the same with the materials and furnishings of the house I lived in and the clothing I wore. The whole world contributes to the material well-being of each civilized man. In contrast to this the native African—before conditions are modified by civilization—supplies all his own needs. He has the assistance only of his wife and he could dispense with that. The entire provision for his material well-being is furnished within the area of his visible horizon or within the radius of an hour's walk from his village. There is no regular buying or selling and no money.

In this social condition men are very much alike, and there is a close approximation to equality. Each man possesses all the knowledge of his tribe and can do what any other man can do ; there is no "differentiation of function," and no interdependence. There is only na-

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ture's own difference of male and female ; the only real society is that of the family. The village is an enlarged family the maximum size of which depends upon the necessity of combining against a common foe. African society, therefore, beyond the family, has scarcely more coherence than a herd of gregarious animals. It is not an organism but a mere aggregation of individuals.

The interdependence of civilization is largely the result of man's increasing *conquest of nature* ; and this is the next contrast between civilized society and that of Africa. The difference between the canoe and the steamship is typical. Improved means of transportation, beginning with the use of steam, has made possible the exchange of products between remote countries. The ever-increasing knowledge of nature, resulting in mechanical inventions, has made near neighbours of the nations. We read the news of the world each morning. Money contributed in New York to-day for the relief of a famine in China is distributed there to-morrow. The whole world is embraced in our daily thought and interest. The African, unless he lives by a river, knows nothing of the world beyond the farthest village to which he has walked. Not even the invention of the wheel has reached him. The civilized man has made nature supplement himself ; has made himself swifter than the swiftest of animals and stronger than the strongest, and has multiplied a thousand-fold the product of his labour. In order to disseminate the benefits of this increasing conquest of nature there arises a demand for skilled labour ; and upon the principle that a man can do but one thing in a lifetime and do it well, different classes appear, performing different functions in the social body, dependent upon one another as the various organs of the body depend upon one another, and society becomes an organism developing from simplicity to complexity.

The *intellectual development* of the civilized man as compared with the savage—his knowledge of the world in which he lives, and of man himself—his science and philosophy, his refining enjoyments of literature and music—all that is embraced in *education* creates even a greater difference than that of material well-being. As steam and electricity have annihilated space so the printing-press has annihilated time. The knowledge and the wisdom of the past are recorded for our benefit. A pigmy standing on a giant's shoulders (Macaulay observes) can see further than the giant; and a schoolboy of our times knows more astronomy than Galileo. Each generation stands upon the shoulders of the preceding generation. There is nothing in any way corresponding to this in Africa. There is no increase of knowledge and no expanding intelligence. The intellectual stagnation, the stifling mental torpor of an African community must be experienced in order to be realized.

Another striking difference between America and Africa is the *authority of custom* in Africa, and its resulting social immobility. Returning to America after only a few years in Africa one is surprised and somewhat bewildered by the changes that have taken place. It takes considerable time to adjust oneself to altered conditions. In Africa there is no trace of any change in customs, or any alteration of methods, from time immemorial. Conduct, even in its details, is governed by custom. Nobody questions its authority; nobody violates it. The appeal to custom is final.

For instance, the rite of circumcision is universally practiced and rigidly regarded, but nobody knows why. There may be a good reason for it—I believe there is—but they have forgotten it. Or, to give an example of its authority even in trivialities, the slavers in the old days trained the men of the Kru tribe to work on ships and

thereafter finding them useful allies persuaded them to put a distinguishing mark upon themselves so that none of them might be taken and enslaved by mistake. The mark is a tattooed band running down the middle of the forehead to the tip of the nose. With the suppression of the slave-trade the usefulness of this ugly disfigurement of course became obsolete ; but the fashion was meanwhile established and to this day every Krumen is thus tattooed. He has forgotten its origin. If you ask him the reason for this mark he thinks that he gives a perfect explanation when he says : " It be fashion for we country." To ask him the reason for the custom is equivalent to asking why right is right. The finality of the appeal to custom is like our appeal to the ten commandments. Of course the authority of custom in Africa serves to check personal tyranny and to modify the principle that might is right. It thus prevents society from going backward ; but it also prevents it from going forward ; a thousand years are as a day. Mobility is a condition of progress.

A more radical difference between the civilized man and the African than any we have yet mentioned is that of *work*. It is not merely a contrast between actual work and idleness, but a contrast of attitudes that constitutes this difference. " Use, labour of each for all," says Emerson, " is the health and virtue of all beings. *Ich dien*, I serve, is a truly royal motto. And it is the mark of nobleness to volunteer the lowest service, the greatest spirit only attaining to humility. Nay, God is God, because He is the servant of all. . . . All honest men are daily striving to earn their bread by their industry. And who is this who tosses his empty head at this blessing in disguise, and calls labour vile, and insults the workman at his daily toil ? "

This is everywhere the sentiment of the truly civilized man. He may be lazy but he still recognizes the dignity

of labour. But the African recognizes only the dignity of idleness and deems it the true badge of superiority. Work is not so obnoxious to his laziness as it is to his self-respect. It is the brand of inferiority. It is not *exertion* that he hates: he exerts himself in war and in hunting. It is when work assumes the form of *service* that it offends him. Manhood, he believes, consists in self-assertion as contrasted with self-sacrifice. His ideal is not to minister but to be ministered unto. Therefore work is relegated to women, who are weaker and cannot resist the imposition.

It is only necessary to point out one more difference between Africa and civilization; and in this last, it seems to me, we have before us the difference that is really fundamental: it is *trustworthiness*.

Civilization depends upon this quality in men. To the entire social structure of civilization each individual contributes strength or weakness according to his trustworthiness. In New York it has sometimes been found, upon investigation, that in the steel frame of certain high buildings many of the rivet holes were filled with soap and putty instead of rivets. In the same city not long ago, in the family of a prominent physician, the maid who had the care of the children went calling on a friend and found that in the friend's home there was scarlet fever. The maid considered only that she had already had scarlet fever and was therefore safe from it. So she made the call, but she carried the fever back to the physician's home and his children died from it. Such exceptions prove the rule, namely, that trustworthiness is the social cement of civilization.

A Fang village of a hundred persons can hold together constituting a society; but as soon as it grows to a group of about two hundred it goes to pieces and forms new villages. The men of the smaller village are more closely

related, are brothers, and affection, a sentiment of brotherhood, insures a certain amount of honesty in their mutual relations. As the relationship widens this sentiment weakens and distrust takes the place of confidence. And the worst of it is that they distrust each other because they really know each other ; because they are *untrustworthy*. Distrust is the dissolution of society.

Some years ago at Batanga the white traders introduced a "trust system," whereby a quantity of goods were entrusted to a native, that he might go to the interior and trade with the expectation of paying for the goods with ivory or other trade produce upon his return to the coast. This simple arrangement was regarded by the trader as extremely satisfactory. He charged enormous prices in ivory for his goods, and besides—theoretically—he got the ivory, which otherwise was difficult to procure. He did not worry about the payment ; for the German governor, being an obliging gentleman, and wishing to stimulate trade, threatened long imprisonment and lavish flogging to any and every native who should betray his trust ; who, for instance, would spend the goods in buying a number of wives for the time being, in giving large presents to all his relations, or in making merry with the whole community and wasting his substance in riotous living. The iron hand of the Kaiser would prevent all that, and the trust-system would soon make Batanga a centre of commerce and civilization. Of course all the enterprising young natives hurried to get goods that they did not have to pay for until some other time, realizing only the foolishness of worrying about the future, and that possession is ten-tenths of the law in Africa.

Well, after a great while they all came back accompanied by the Kaiser's soldiers. When the old matter of the goods was mentioned to them and a longing for ivory was expressed, the response was uniform : " Dem goods ?

Dem goods you done give me ? Why, mastah, all dem goods done loss."

At the very earnest appeal of the missionaries, reinforced by the limited capacity of the jail at Kribi, a law was finally passed abolishing the trust-system in that particular form.

It was not fair. The poor native's sense of moral responsibility was unequal to the demand made upon it. For the same reason a high form of civilization cannot be superimposed upon a morally degraded people. Their moral responsibility would not be equal to its demands ; it would bear too hard upon them even as upon children ; it would crush them.

In thus recording the successive contrasts between civilization and the savage state, I am not conscious of exploiting a theory, but have rather recorded the differences that impressed me in the course of actual experience in Africa ; and I have recorded them somewhat in the order of their importance, passing from outward and manifest differences to those that are less obvious and more fundamental. But we find that we have gradually passed from social conditions to individual qualities and that the fundamental difference is *personal character*.

A short time after the organization of a church among the Fang, the *Ayol Church*, I held a communion service in which about sixty persons, some of them from distant towns, sat together at the "Lord's Table." Let the reader imagine himself at that service with me ; and let us consider briefly the social energy of the new moral forces represented by that service.

The very first thing that we observe in contrast to the surrounding heathenism is that both men and women are partaking together of this symbolic feast. The Fang man does not eat with his wife ; so here immediately a custom is violated and the equality of woman is recog-

nized. This same principle has abolished polygamy, and there is not a polygamist at this table. The authority of custom in its chief stronghold is challenged and overthrown by a divine law that judges all customs, however ancient, and which is henceforth the highest authority. The sacred institution of the family is purified. It is not by ecclesiastical enactment that polygamy is abolished; the enactment would be ineffective but for the higher estimate of woman which Christianity has introduced by exalting those qualities in which she especially excels, and establishing a mutual relation as incompatible with polygamy as with polyandry.

We also observe that these sixty persons represent many various clans of the Fang, and even different tribes, for there are two Mpongwe women present. The heathen Mpongwe despise the Fang. And between the different clans of the Fang themselves there are ancient feuds and relentless hatreds. But the very meaning of this service is *fellowship*.

The heathen Fang have no salutation, and need none; their instinct is to hide rather than to meet. But the people who meet at this service salute each other with the word *monejang*—*brother*, or *sister*. And they did not learn this salutation from me; for I had never used it thus; but where the Spirit of Christ is, there is the instinct of brotherhood. This Christian society, therefore, although scattered far and wide, and having no material interests in common, is yet drawn together by an invisible bond which is already stronger than all the disintegrating forces of the savage state. When the population of a Fang village reaches the number of two hundred its dissolution is imminent. But each member of this Christian society has pledged himself to the conversion of others; and as the society grows its coherence increases.

In their worship also, as well as in their fellowship, we find certain principles of social energy. Their view of God and of the world makes possible the *conquest of nature*, which is the basis of our material civilization. These men and women have all parted with their fetishes. That means that they have defied the multitude of evil spirits in whom they once believed and have definitely committed themselves to faith in one God, the Father of all, in whom mankind are brothers.

But it means more than this. The spirits of evil in whom they believed were localized in the objects of nature and to their presence all natural phenomena were due. Nature was therefore lawless and hostile. But these demons have all been cast out by the presence and power of God in nature. They now thank Him for the fruitfulness of their gardens and they pray to Him in the midst of the storm. One mind, a divine intelligence, presides over nature and the world is not run by magic, but governed by law. They do not comprehend the full content of their faith; neither do we. But they are fundamentally right and education will do the rest. They already have that knowledge upon which the *conquest of nature* depends.

We observe that many of those present in this service have books. The books are the Gospel of Matthew and the book of Genesis, which have been translated into their own language—the first Fang books. Nearly all the younger persons present and some of those who are old have learned to read that they might read these books. We are never quite prepared for the thirst for knowledge, the intellectual awakening, incident to their spiritual birth. They live in a new world; they are citizens of a world-wide kingdom and they want to know all about it. Poor as they are they will soon be giving of their slender means for the spread of the Gospel

among people whom they have never seen. We are bound to respond to this desire for knowledge and to encourage it to the utmost. Education is not a mere expedient by which the missionary obtains the good-will of the people and secures a hearing for the Gospel ; it is a demand created by the Gospel itself and henceforth the necessary adjunct of evangelistic work. Many, like myself, have gone to Africa intent upon evangelistic work, and before long have chosen to spend most of their time in the schoolroom.

Again, in this service, they celebrate, in the death of Christ, a *self-sacrificing service* ; and to this same spirit of self-sacrifice as against self-assertion, they all are solemnly pledged. This attitude of mutual service is another strong factor of coherence. It constitutes not only the best society possible, but also the most progressive, and it is, for our purpose, especially significant in that it implies an altered attitude towards work. They still have to contend with natural laziness, but they are no longer the victims of a false ideal. Service is not a disgrace, but a duty.

In the organization represented in this service, as well as in its fellowship and its worship, we shall find principles of social progress ; we shall find this Christian society a model of organization for all the social institutions and native governments that progress may in the future demand.

Guizot, speaking of legitimacy in government, says :

"The conditions of legitimacy are the same in the government of a religious society as in all others. They may be reduced to two : the first is, that authority should be placed and constantly remain, as effectually at least as the imperfection of all human affairs will permit, in the hands of the best, the most capable ; so that the legitimate superiority, which lies scattered in various parts

of society, may be thereby drawn out, collected and delegated to discover the social law,—to exercise its authority. The second is that the authority thus legitimately constituted should respect the legitimate liberties of those whom it is called to govern. A good system for the formation and organization of authority, a good system of securities for liberty, are the two conditions in which the goodness of government resides, whether civil or religious. And it is by this standard that all should be judged."

And to this standard the government of this mission church conforms. The two elders who officiate in this service have been chosen by the members of the church themselves, and for no reason whatever except their moral worth and wisdom. One of the elders is Mb'Obam, a noted chief, a man of wide influence even among the heathen. The other, Okeh, is in all, except moral worth, the opposite extreme from Mb'Obam; diminutive and weak in body, he is useless for war and non-combative in disposition, the kind of a man whom the heathen despise and ridicule—but so kind, so pure in heart, so humble, that none was more worthy to be exalted and these Christians proved themselves by their perception of his worth. The progress of this African community, implied in the choice of such a one as Okeh for leader, has leaped across uncounted centuries.

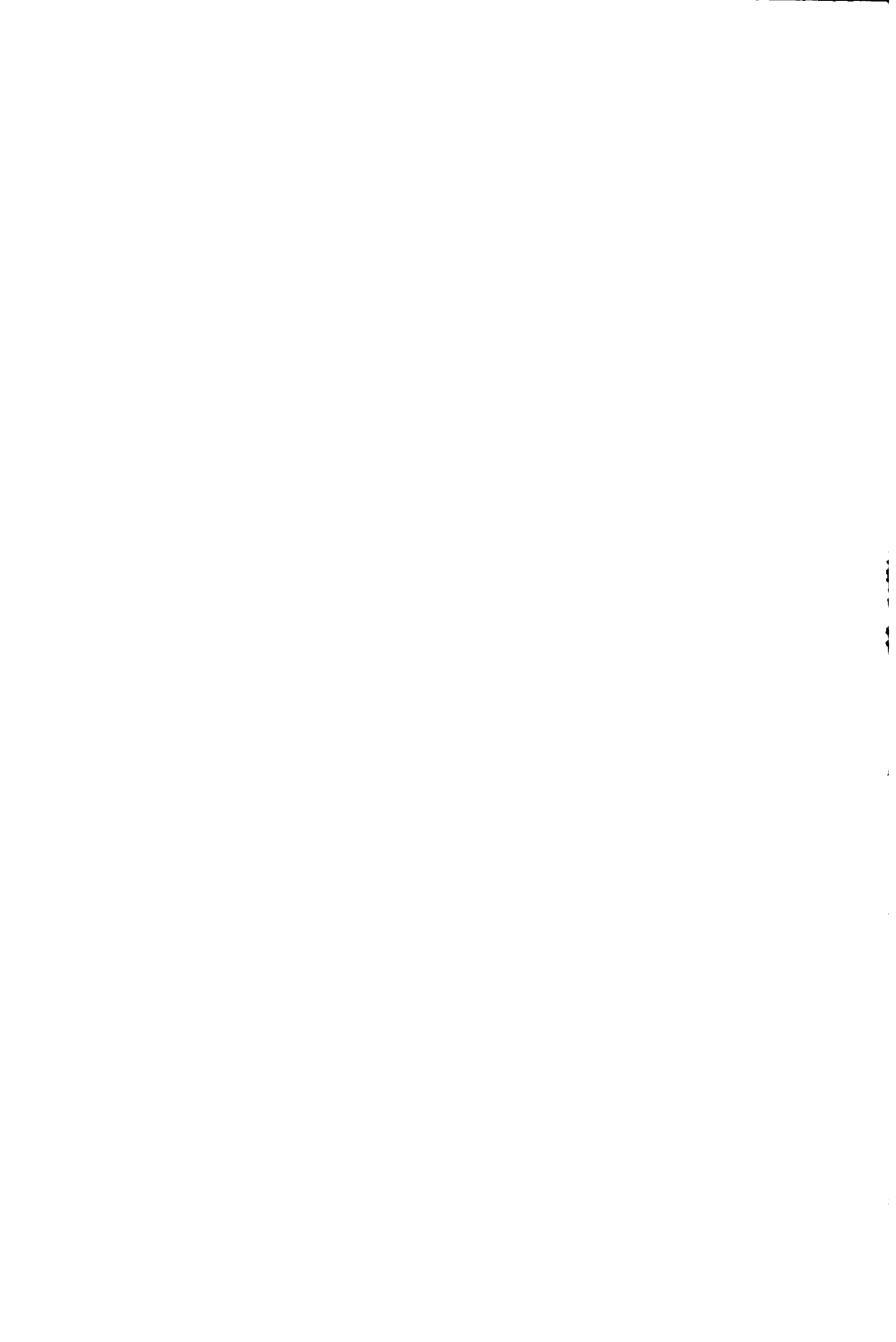
The man whom the Mpongwe church has recognized as pastor for many years—though he was never ordained—was born a slave. The place of highest authority is attainable to those in every rank; no class is especially privileged; no privileges are hereditary; there is no such thing as *caste* within this society; and therefore it is more likely to be progressive and not stationary. In short, superiority, wherever found, is recognized, drawn out, and invested with authority to govern.

For the *security of liberty* it is only needful to mention the Bible, the authoritative word, to which all have equal access. But there is another factor. This government uses no force. It declares that temporal and spiritual authority are essentially different and must be kept forever separate; that physical force has rightful authority only over the actions of men, but never over the mind or its convictions. This declaration of the *liberty of conscience* is the parent of civil and political liberty.

It is difficult for the American, accustomed to the separation of spiritual and temporal power, to realize the utter confusion in the African mind—and in heathen minds elsewhere—of moral authority and physical force. Tyranny is the inevitable consequence of this confusion. It is easy to object that Europe at one period in her history had to contend against the Church itself for this very principle of separation and the liberty of conscience which it involves. But at an earlier period, it was the Church which first instructed Europe in this principle by insisting upon the separation of the two authorities, and which implanted the idea of liberty; and when it became obscured it was by rebellion within the Church that it was recovered. The Church is not repeating on the field of missions the mistakes of its history in Europe; and therefore as a social force it progresses with accelerated velocity.

Such then are the forces of social progress which are inherent in this Christian society, forces which are altogether new and strange in Africa, forces which place this society in the line of continuous and indefinite progress towards civilization.

Already we may see the beginning of civilization in material things. The first thing that emerges from the inchoate society is the home. I have already spoken of the abolishment of polygamy; but a home also implies a





A FASHIONABLE WEDDING IN KAMERUN.

house. The houses of a Fang village are built on either side of one narrow street, under one continuous roof, and consist of a single room separated from the next dwelling by a half-open bamboo partition. But the Christian wants a better house, because he is a better man. It is noticeable that the Christian man separates himself from this common village life and builds a single house of several rooms for himself and his family. All Christians do not immediately do so ; but the tendency is sufficiently marked to insure the certainty that the idea of the home will prevail. These better houses have windows, and doors on hinges, and sometimes even a board floor. There is therefore a demand for carpenters and other skilled workmen. Here is where the industrial school responds to an exigent need and is both an adjunct and a direct result of evangelization. Here also is the beginning of a division of labour and that interdependence which characterizes civilization.

The Fang Christians are all clothed ; for decency is a Christian instinct. The cloth which they now wear is imported from England and America. They pay for it with the produce of their gardens. For this purpose they raise more than they need for their own consumption. Their gardens are therefore much larger than they used to be, and both men and women work in them. Having better clothing they must take care of it ; therefore they want to sit on chairs, instead of on the ground. Neither can they keep their clothing decently clean if they eat their food with their hands. Knives and forks and plates and tables are soon added to the household furnishings. One thing demands another ; each added comfort requires more work. Those men now expend in productive labour the energy which they formerly wasted in conflict.

Such is the general course of development towards a

social community having intercourse with the civilized world ; receiving much, and adding its increment to the material welfare of the race and the sum of happiness.

All the constitutive elements of civilization may be summed up in two things : a condition of interdependence in material things, and a sentiment of human brotherhood. But we have seen that the progressive interdependence of civilization is based upon an increasing knowledge of nature, and that this knowledge of nature becomes possible to the African through the Christian view of God and the world. We have seen that faith in Christ effects a mental and moral regeneration of the individual from which springs a sentiment of brotherhood and spirit of mutual trust which is the coherence of society without which it becomes a heap of sand. The saying is reasonable, therefore, that civilization is but the secular side of Christianity ; and all the good which social progress comprehends is embodied in the prayer which these Fang Christians unitedly offer : *Ayong dia nzak—Thy kingdom come.*

Commerce and government in our day are making the claim that they are the all-sufficient forces of civilization throughout the world. But however much they have accomplished that is beneficial, we cannot forget the evils which have attached to them ; that in Africa and elsewhere commerce is responsible for the sale of rum and for other evils as degrading ; and that government by the civilized powers, despite such grandiloquent phrases as "the onward march of civilization," has consisted very much in taking territory from those to whom it belonged, because, forsooth, "they have a darker complexion or a flatter nose." Both commerce and government are invaluable adjuncts of Christianity ; but it has within itself the potentialities of both.

That prayer, *Thy Kingdom Come*, is being offered daily

in every land and in every language of the world and everywhere it has the same meaning. It means that all those who sincerely offer it, however great the contrast of their history and traditions, are a community, united by the stronger bonds of aims and ideals. It means that they have a vision of a united race of mankind ; a vision of all nations drawn into one common brotherhood in commerce, government and religion, and that they believe in the abounding adequacy of the Gospel of Christ for its realization. Society resounds with the cry of the oppressed and the dissonance of human passion ; but still they cherish the vision of unity and peace ; and they believe that this *kingdom of God* is the end towards which all social progress moves.

## XVII

### THE CRITICS

ELSEWHERE I have represented the *climate* as the theme of the Old Coaster whom the voyager meets after leaving Liverpool, or some other European port, for West Africa. He makes free use of all the adjectives that have usually been appropriated to the characterization of sin and death.

But I may not have said that the Old Coaster has what musicians call a *sub-theme*. His sub-theme is *Missions*. The unity of his conversation is secured by the use of the same adjectives. If the missionary is coddled at home or foolishly praised, the severe and relentless criticism to which he is subjected after leaving Europe may be regarded as a providential discipline. According to the Old Coaster every evil that infests West Africa is due directly or indirectly to the missionary. I have heard him blamed for the Belgian atrocities of the Congo, and for the Hut Tax War of Sierra Leone, and even for the fatality of the climate. For, it is said, everybody knows that it is not malaria but quinine that kills the white man in Africa; the belief in quinine is simply fatuous, and its use is criminal; and the missionary alone is responsible. Rum, which is the only protection against malaria, would keep the traders alive, but sooner or later, following the example of the missionary, they take quinine and die.

These criticisms serve to while away the time, and do no harm unless there should be on board a smart traveller who is bent upon learning all about Africa from the deck

of a steamer and then giving his knowledge to the world in a book. The Old Coaster (and the name often includes the captain and officers of the ship) is obsessed with the desire to impart information. The missionary has magazines through which his voice is heard: but the smart traveller is the Old Coaster's opportunity and he makes the best of it and pours forth a volume of misinformation sufficient to fill the most capacious mental vacuum. The Old Coaster thus employed is not more than half malicious. He sometimes winks at a missionary standing by, as much as to say: "The joke's on you." He generally divides missionaries into two classes, *deliberate impostors* and *well-meaning fools*, generously assuming that the missionary present belongs to the latter class, so that the relation of good-fellowship on board is not necessarily disturbed by the anti-missionary acrimony.

One of these travelling critics was so wrought upon by the reported misdoings of missionaries and their destructive influence upon the religion and the morals of the natives that before he reached the Congo he went clean crazy—as witness the following from his book: "What religious furies with unholy rage have demolished those weird gods, and disturbed fervent but unobtruding piety in the exercise of its duties?" It may have been the result of going ashore without an umbrella. I never heard whether this man recovered; but let travellers take warning and not trifle with the dangers of the coast and the Old Coaster.

One is impressed by the bewildering inconsistency of the criticisms, so contradictory that if all were published no further answer would be necessary than to cite critic against critic. The more numerous class of critics contend that the native is so morally inferior that he cannot be improved; and a profession of Christian faith only adds to his heathen vices a more disgusting hypocrisy.

The other class of critics, less numerous, but more intelligent and reputable, contend, on the contrary, that the native is all right as he is, his pristine morality becomes him ; there is no need to improve him and we ought not to try.

Not long ago Prof. Frederick Starr after a brief visit to the Congo published his opinions in the *Chicago Tribune* and made many strictures upon missionary work. He wrote under the rather complacent caption, "The truth about the Congo," quite confident that his word and hasty observations were sufficient to discredit the hundreds who had gone before him, as able and as honest as himself, and who had lived many years in the Congo. Professor Starr confesses at the outset that he personally "dislikes the effort to elevate, civilize, and remake a people," and that he "should prefer to leave the African as he was before the white contact." It is his opinion that civilized folk have no right to change the customs, institutions or ideas of any tribe, even with the purpose of saving their souls. Such critics regard the African, not at all with a human and sympathetic interest, as a fellow man, capable of progress, and possibly endowed with an immortal soul ; but with an esthetic and historical interest, as constituting a link between us and our ape-ancestry, an object to be appraised like a piece of antique art, not for its present or future use, but for the past. To change him shows a want of good taste and historical imagination, even if the change relieve his suffering and improve his morals ; that were a small compensation if we thereby impoverish the variety of human types and leave the world less interesting to the connoisseur. Incidentally, Professor Starr denied categorically the reported atrocities of the Belgians in the Congo Free State. He had asked the Belgians themselves about the matter.

In seeking to explain the wide-spread criticism of mis-

sions and of missionaries it ought to be frankly admitted that among missionaries there are misfits and occasional freaks whose misconduct scandalizes the well deserving. If we have any knowledge of human nature, and realize that in every society there are unworthy and false members, we should not even expect that the ranks of missionaries alone would be exempt. By denying a palpable fact we only exasperate our critics and lead them to doubt the sincerity of all instead of a very few. It is always wholesome to admit the truth, and indiscriminate praise is as foolish and misleading as wholesale criticism.

On one of my voyages to Africa a certain missionary was regarded as "the biggest liar on board." What in the world ever attracted him to the mission field it were hard to imagine. Criticism of other and all missionaries was his favourite employment, especially when conversing with those who were hostile to the work. While we were anchored at Accra I heard him say to a trader, as he pointed ashore towards the splendid English mission : "That is where the missionaries take in heathen and turn out devils." He did not stay long in the mission but he did considerable harm in a short time and created painful misunderstandings that were by no means removed by his departure. Imagine the position of a missionary placed perhaps alone with such a man, with no other companionship and no escape from his neighbourhood ! Moreover the report of the missionary's work, and even his reputation, depends upon the other man ; he is therefore at his mercy. For the reputation of one who labours in a lonely and distant field may be indefinitely greater or less than he deserves. The man of whom I speak, after his return to America, figured in the police courts in New York City, where he was arrested on a very serious and odious charge. His record there is still accessible.

Well-meaning missionaries sometimes make themselves ridiculous in the eyes of white men by their attitude and manner towards the natives. I once witnessed such a scene, when a missionary standing on deck, in the presence of white men, conversed with a group of natives in a manner so unseemly and so silly that the comments of the white men were chiefly oaths and ribald laughter. When at last the natives after an hour on board were about to go ashore, one of them, a young savage about sixteen or seventeen years of age with scarcely a stitch of clothing on him, came to the missionary and said : "Me, I go for shore ;" whereupon the missionary extended his hand and lifting his huge helmet exclaimed in a very loud voice accompanied by a sweeping bow : "Good-bye, sir ; good-bye ; and I'm happy to have met you, sir."

The captain in a voice of thunder turned to me and said : "Who is that fool ?" I have weakened the captain's forceful language by omitting his expletive, which the average reader will easily supply.

More frequently, yet perhaps not often, the missionary errs in his attitude towards his worldly-minded fellow passengers on these long voyages—is unamiable, or indulges in moral strictures in a way that cannot possibly do good, and is calculated to create prejudice and antipathy.

I recall one Sunday when two army officers thought to kill time by playing ball on deck. Like others of their class, they regarded all civilians with contempt and missionaries with abhorrence. They were interesting when drunk, but extremely stupid when sober. A lady missionary came and sat down in her chair on the side of the deck where they were playing ball. As the man at the bat began to strike more vigorously the ball occasionally flew past the lady at an uncomfortably short distance. There were chairs on the other side of the deck

where she could have been quite as comfortable, and there was only one place where there was room to play ball ; but those men were breaking the Sabbath, and she must protest by staying there and looking righteous, that is to say, very cross. She was naturally modest as well as kind-hearted, and she remained there wholly from a sense of duty. She was a small, scanty person, with a prominent nose, and she sat bolt upright, her nose looking like an intentional target for the ball. Once when it whizzed past her one of the men said, " Aren't you afraid you will get hit with this ball if you stay there ? " It never seemed to occur to him that there was another alternative, namely, for them to stop playing.

She seemed not to hear, but looked more cross than ever, and appeared as if she wanted to get hit, so as to be a martyr to her principles ; or at least so as to have a better reason for looking so cross. The captain came along and after contemplating for a moment the smiling levity of those worldly men and the contrasting acerbity of the Christian woman's countenance, as she sat there keeping the Sabbath day holy, he went to the side and laughed overboard. At length a fellow missionary approached her and asked if she would go with him to the other side of the deck, adding that he wanted to talk with her on a matter of missionary interest. She was a real good woman with a mistaken sense of duty. We must surely seek to be amiable to people as we find them, and try to like people as they are. Such conduct is a source of irritation to those who indulge in it, and it inspires dislike and consequent criticism.

Another source of criticism is the missionary magazines of the various societies engaged in missionary work. These magazines fall into the hands of the trader ; and sometimes he finds a glowing account of the great work being done by Missionary A who happens to be his neigh-

bour, and he is unable to reconcile the report with the work which he has seen with his own eyes. Usually his eyes are at fault. He is blind to spiritual values. There are old traders in Gaboon who do not know that there is a native Christian in the community.

But we cannot dismiss the whole matter in this cavalier manner, and I feel like adding that the missionary magazine, however necessary, is not an unmixed good. It is not good that a man should let his left hand know all that his right hand does. The missionary magazine reports to the world what the missionary chooses to write about his own work. If his letters are interesting and report large success they are eagerly sought and published ; and he of course is not callously indifferent to his reputation. But, inasmuch as there are few or no witnesses but himself, the magazine puts a premium on egotism and immodesty ; and it sometimes fosters a kind of spiritual impotence which needs the stimulus of publicity. One of the bravest and best missionaries it has ever been my privilege to know, the Rev. William Chambers Gault, was seldom mentioned in a missionary magazine and little known to the church at home, though he laboured for many long years in Africa and is buried there. Mr. Gault was incorrigibly modest.

But even with the utmost margin of excuse—admitting the foolishness of fulsome and indiscriminate praise ; admitting that missionaries are mortal, and some few of them *desperately* mortal—it remains that the wholesale criticism and violent denunciation that one hears on the voyage is unjust and outrageous. We must look for the reason of it in the critics themselves—the non-missionary white men residing in Africa. And in themselves we will find reason enough.

First of all, many or most of these men, according to their own confession, are not men of personal faith in

Christ, but men who deride the Gospel in which we believe. Of all those who have criticized missions, I have only known of one man who himself professed to be a Christian; his criticism was rather mild and was due more to what he had heard than what he had seen.

Carlyle has said: "Unbelief talking about belief is like a blind man discussing the laws of optics." How can a man think it worth while to expend lives and money in preaching to the heathen a Gospel which he himself rejects? If the Gospel itself is foolishness those who preach it must be fools, and the greatest fools are those who preach it at the greatest sacrifice. What does cynicism know about enthusiasm? It was not "much learning," but much Christianity, that made Paul seem mad to Festus. Manifestly the first question to ask the disbeliever in missions is whether he is also a disbeliever in Christianity and in Christ. It is really astonishing that so many critics of missions, and so many of their readers, should treat this latter question as entirely irrelevant.

Racial antipathy towards the black man is also a reason of hostility to missions. The intensity of this feeling where the inferior race is in the majority is surprising, even in men who in all their other relations are generous and considerate. In the opinion of many a white man in Africa the black man is little better than a beast, and they treat him accordingly. To speak of him as a brother man is to insult the white man.

This antipathy actually prefers that the black man should remain in his present degradation—perhaps to justify itself. It resents every effort to elevate him; and as it sees him actually rising to the moral level of the white man it is only intensified into hatred. One soon perceives that the object of the white man's greatest aversion is not the lowest native, but the best. The

critic may therefore be sincere when he declares that he can see no good in the native product of missions, for he is blinded by this special prejudice. Racial antipathy is much more marked in the government official than in the trader; yet even the traders when they live in communities often have a code of arrogant manners according to which they ostracize any of their number who may extend to the native a degree of social recognition.

This antipathy must necessarily be hostile to missionary work. For the work of the missionary implies that he regards the black man as a brother man; one who is also capable of moral elevation. He is not necessarily blind to the present degradation of the native; but he insists that he does not belong to the present, but to the future; that he is endowed with an immortal soul and the moral possibilities which immortality implies. He admits the worst but "sees the best that glimmers through the worst," and "hears the lark within the songless egg." And experience has justified his faith.

The missionary treats the native according to this belief, and as he rises gives him exactly the social place to which his character as an individual entitles him. He takes very little interest in the abstract question of equality, or whether the black man is inherently inferior and different in kind from the white man. But he believes that in Christian brotherhood there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither black nor white. This attitude and the behaviour which comports with it are obnoxious to many white men, and are inevitably a source of much hostility to missions.

To the impulse of racial antipathy there is often added that of angry passion unchecked by social restraints, and stimulated by the irritability of a malaria-infected temper.

One day during a sea voyage a white man was telling a

number of us how the native workman ought to be managed. Addressing a missionary he said: "You missionaries make a great mistake in being kind to the native workman. To let him know that you value him is to spoil him; to praise him is to make him impudent; to trust him is to make him a thief. The proper way to manage him is never to speak to him without swearing; and to curse him even when he does his best. They are all misbegotten sons of rum-puncheons, whose highest idea of heaven is idleness and drink. They hate us all, and the only way to get any service out of them is to use the club. Every man who has ever worked for me bears the mark of my club, and some of them I have maimed for life. It is the only way to get the brutes to do anything."

The missionary replied: "I believe every word that you say in regard to your treatment of the native. But this much at least is to be said for my method, as against yours, that mine is a complete success, and yours a complete failure, even according to your own confession. Most men do not brag about their failures, nor try to teach others what they themselves have not yet learned. In spite of kicks and curses you do not get the natives to work. One must conclude, therefore, that you like kicking and cursing more than you like success. Now my method succeeds to the extent that I usually get from the native all the service for which I pay him; and, besides, they have nursed me when I was sick; and they have vied with each other in protecting me from the sun by day and storms by night; they have exposed themselves to danger for my sake, and they have even saved my life at the extremest peril of their own. But would you therefore exchange your method for mine? No; not even for the sake of success."

But the worst cruelty of the foreigner towards the

native results from the union of trade and government—when the government official is also a trader. This is what happened in the miserable Congo Free State, when the king of the Belgians became the king of traders. The concession system of the Belgians was afterwards introduced into the French Congo. But at length a voice was heard that had long been silent, and De Brazza, rival of Stanley and founder of the French Congo, came forth from his well-earned retirement, and France was stirred with the eloquence of a great man's indignation. The result was that the worn-out explorer himself was appointed the head of a commission that was sent to investigate the conditions in those parts of the French Congo in which the concession system was in operation. De Brazza died at Dakar on his return, a martyr to his efforts for justice and humanity in Africa. But his report was already written, in which he charged M. Gentil, Commissioner General of the French Congo, with maladministration and great cruelty towards the natives. He reported a number of natives flogged to death with knotted whips. He stated that on one occasion, at the colonial office at Bangui, in order to force the natives to bring trade-produce—called taxes—fifty-eight women and ten children were taken and held as prisoners and that within five weeks forty-seven of these died of starvation. Is it any wonder that to certain white men the usual methods of the missionary seem very slow and ineffective?

The missionary is the champion of the helpless native against the white man's cruelty, and if he sometimes oversteps the limit of discretion, as is often said (though I do not know of a single instance), his excessive zeal is at least on the side of justice and humanity, and it is also in behalf of the weak against the strong. The government official seldom burns down native towns for

pastime in the community where there is a missionary. When remonstrance is unavailing the missionary will at length report the matter to a higher official, and even the highest. And if such cruelty be general and atrocities abound, he even carries his remonstrance to the governments of Europe, or appeals to the civilized world, as he has done in regard to the Belgian Congo.

Again, there is no doubt that the particular vices which so many white men practice in Africa are a source of estrangement between them and the missionaries and a reason for hostility and consequent criticism of missions.

It is easy to be uncharitable and even unjust when writing on this subject. The contrast between the *selfish* motives of the trader and the unselfish motives of the missionary has been overworked. It is not necessarily greed for gold that takes the trader to Africa, but often a perfectly honourable ambition. Besides, I have known traders who went to Africa chiefly because it offered the most immediate opportunity in sight for them to help out at home when younger brothers and sisters were to be educated and the family was in straitened circumstances. The pity is that they did not know the subtlety of the temptations awaiting them. They were strong enough to live up to their moral standards, but they did not see that those standards themselves would imperceptibly be lowered. Yet this is what happens.

In a recent book, *The Basis of Ascendancy*, the author, Mr. Edgar Gardner Murphy, speaking of the small proportion (as it seems to him) of the nation's brains which the Southern white man of the United States supplies as compared with the New Englander, sets forth most earnestly the danger to the white man in the Southern states of contact with the low standards of an inferior race. The significant fact, Mr. Murphy says, is not the mere pressure of a lower racial standard, but the white man's

cumulative modification of his own standards of self-criticism and self-direction :

"Through the conditions of his familiar contact with less highly developed habits of efficiency, with forms of will more immature than his, he is deprived of that bracing and corrective force, resident in the standard of his peers, which, manifesting itself within every personal world as one of the higher forms of social coöperation, is, in fact, the moral equivalent of competition. He may sin and not die. His more exacting expectations of himself are not echoed from without. Of himself, as he would prefer to see himself, there is no spiritual mirror. The occasional tendency to take himself at his second best is socially unchecked, and both his powers and his inclinations tend to assume the forms of approximation imposed by a life of habitual relationship with a mind lower than his own.

"To say that the stronger tends to become brutal because the weaker is brutal, or slovenly because the weaker is slovenly, is to touch the process only on its surface. The deeper fact is not that of imitation, nor yet that of contagion. It is that tragedy of recurrent accommodations, of habitual self-adjustment to lower conceptions of life and to feebler notions of excellence, which is nothing less than education in its descending and contractive forms."

This is incomparably more true in Africa than it ever has been or ever can be in the Southern states. The worst of the remote possibilities which Mr. Murphy describes are fully realized in Africa. The velocity of the process is accelerated by the depressing effect of the climate.

The missionary too is more or less sensible of this influence upon himself ; but he is guarded by the fact that his very purpose in Africa is to introduce and teach his own standards to the natives and he is constantly oc-

cupied in pointing out the superiority of his own and the inferiority of theirs. Moreover any definite accommodation to native standards would mean disgrace and failure; to other white men it means neither. Indeed the white man, other than the missionary, who proposes to maintain the home standards in Africa will sometimes find himself ostracized by his fellows.

The use of rum by the natives the missionary is bound to denounce and within the membership of the church it is absolutely forbidden. But in doing this the missionary by implication reflects very seriously upon many white men. For the excessive drinking of the majority of white men in Africa, with its appalling consequences, is so well known that there is no need to exploit it. And when the native connected with the mission church refuses either to drink rum or to sell it, thereby professing moral superiority to those white men, the latter are exasperated. And shall the missionary not teach the native the strict observance of the seventh commandment because the white man so flagrantly violates it? The discord arising from this source is greatly aggravated by the fact that so many girls educated in mission schools are enticed by the extraordinary temptations of the white men to a life that the missionary, if he be true to his Christian standards, must condemn; for the girls of the mission are the most intelligent and attractive.

These various reasons are ample explanation of the hostility to missions and the consequent criticisms that are heard all along the coast, and which are occasionally disseminated over the world by some writer who has made a brief stay in Africa and who is so ignorant of the whole subject of missions that it ought not to require much discretion to be silent.

Those who condemn missions on sociological grounds—who, like Professor Starr, think that civilized folk have

no right to change the customs, institutions or ideas of any tribe, even with the purpose of saving their souls—are easily answered. For not only does such a view utterly repudiate the claim of Christ to be the world's Saviour—the "Light of the world," to which every man and nation has a right—but it is also contrary to the accepted principles of sociology. It is untrue and unscientific to say that the social structure of any given people has been fashioned by the people themselves, and therefore meets their needs; and that progressive changes must be brought about by the people themselves without the introduction of outside elements. The student of social evolution knows that the social structure is not always fashioned by the people themselves: it is sometimes altered radically by conquest. Neither does it always meet the people's needs. The first need of a people is bread; and wherever the population is pressing too hard against the means of subsistence, as in India and China, with their recurring famines, there is a sure sign of weakness and defect in the social structure. Neither is it true that progressive changes must be brought about by the people themselves; for there may be social evils—impediments to progress, or tendencies to degeneration—which can only be corrected by the introduction of new ethical elements from without. Mohammedanism, a foreign religion, has become perfectly naturalized in a large portion of Africa, and our critics—most of them—vie with each other in proclaiming the good it has wrought. The spread of Buddhism in the Orient introduced new ideals. Christianity, originating in the Orient, brought new ideals to Europe. In Japan many of the elements worked out by Western civilization have been adopted and naturalized.

Besides, the let-alone policy for Africa even if it were rational is hopelessly late. Foreign trade and govern-

ment have long been established and show no sign of withdrawing. And the question is whether we shall send to Africa our civilization, with all its burden of new demands and moral responsibilities, without disclosing to its primitive and childlike people that which alone supports our material civilization and enables us to bear its moral weight—that which is deepest and best in our thought and life.

One of unusual gifts and attainments, who in all probability would have occupied a position of great influence in the church in America if he had remained at home, after labouring more than forty years in Africa, speaks thus of the temporal benefits consequent upon the spread of Christianity :

“For the feeling with which I was impressed on my very first contact with the miseries of the sociology of heathenism, entirely aside from its theology and any question of salvation in a future life, has been steadily deepened into conviction that, even if I were not a Christian, I still ought to, and would, do and bear and suffer whatever God has called or allowed me to suffer or bear or do since 1861 in my proclamation of His Gospel, simply for the sake of the elevation of heathen during their present earthly life from the wrongs sanctioned by or growing out of their religion.”<sup>1</sup>

But to this apologetic the missionary adds his confident belief that the Christian faith affects not only the Africans' redemption from “the miseries of the sociology of heathenism,” but also and chiefly the salvation of their souls; for he has seen the evidence in the lives of many who have been morally transformed by the power of a new and transcendent hope. Christian missions have made high claims, but their self-estimate has been justified by their achievement.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Robert Hamill Nassau, D. D., *Fetichism in West Africa*, p. 26.

When I was on the voyage to Africa for the first time it chanced that Miss Mary H. Kingsley, the famous English traveller and writer, had just made one of her journeys down the West Coast and her name was in everybody's mouth. Expressions of opinion were remarkable for lack of moderation, and oscillated between extremes of praise and criticism. When I went to Africa the second time Miss Kingsley had finished her travels on the coast and written her books, with their strong indictment of missions. I was amazed at the frequency and assurance with which Miss Kingsley was everywhere quoted. The captain of the steamer upon which I travelled knew her books almost by heart. He could repeat whole pages; which he did with as much reverence as if he were quoting from *Science and Health*. He had no doubt but that she had dealt the final death-blow to missions, and that the era of missionary activity was already drawing to an inglorious close by reason of her indictment. The captain himself seemed to feel real bad about it.

Some years have passed since Miss Kingsley wrote; but she is quoted as much as ever, especially in England. *The African Society* was founded as a memorial to her, and the organ of this society, *The African Society Journal*, bears a medallion portrait of her on its title-page. In short, in English trade circles Miss Kingsley is a kind of religious cult.

Besides being a remarkably clever woman and a brilliant writer, she had the prestige of a great name, being the niece of Charles Kingsley and the daughter of George Kingsley; a name of such historical significance in the Church of England that we should naturally expect Miss Kingsley to be in intellectual and moral sympathy with the Christian religion. Such however is by no means the case. She avows her

disbelief in Christianity and frankly tells us that Spinoza is the exponent of her creed,<sup>1</sup> which is therefore pure pantheism. God does not transcend nature; nor is He separable from it. Moreover, Miss Kingsley does not hold this opinion dispassionately. For instance, the effort to draw moral inspiration from our relation to a personal God (which she chooses to call "emotionalism"), she tells us she regards with "instinctive hatred."<sup>2</sup>

With such views Miss Kingsley finds, when she comes to the study of fetishism, that she half believes in it herself, and she is reluctant to speak against it. She says: "It is a most unpleasant thing for any religious-minded person to speak of a religion unless he either profoundly believes or disbelieves in it. For if he does the one he has the pleasure of praise; if he does the other, he has the pleasure of war, but the thing in between these is the thing that gives neither pleasure; it is like quarrelling with one's own beloved relations. Thus it is with fetish and me!"<sup>3</sup>

We need not be surprised, then, when Miss Kingsley frankly says: "I am unsympathetic, for reasons of my own, with Christian missions."<sup>4</sup>

And not only was there a want of intellectual sympathy with the Christian religion, but a want of moral sympathy as well.

Miss Kingsley says: "An American magazine the other day announced, in a shocked way, that I could evidently 'swear like a trooper.' I cannot think where it got the idea from."<sup>5</sup> *I can.* And I venture the simple guess that the editor had read Miss Kingsley's books—for instance, the interesting *preface to West African Studies*.

<sup>1</sup> *West African Studies*, p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> *Travels in West Africa*, p. 506.

<sup>3</sup> *West African Studies*, p. 113.

<sup>4</sup> *Travels in West Africa*, p. 214.

<sup>5</sup> *West African Studies*, p. 299.

But there are several more serious phases of this want of sympathy with the spirit of Christianity which would militate against Miss Kingsley's competence as a critic of missions, namely, her avowed belief in *slavery*, in *polygamy*, and in the *liquor traffic*. Miss Kingsley, after contending that domestic slavery is "for divers reasons essential to the well-being of Africa," appends the following opinion in a foot-note: "I am of the opinion that the suppression of the export slave trade to the Americas was a grave mistake."<sup>1</sup> Even more vehemently does Miss Kingsley defend native polygamy; and still more vehemently the liquor traffic.

We are grateful for the perfect frankness with which she expresses her views on these three subjects, as it makes it an easier task to discredit her opinion on Christian missions; for, in this day and generation, to believe in these three social evils of Africa and at the same time to believe in missions were impossible. If these are not evils it is a foregone conclusion that the missionary, who is fighting them to the death, is doing more harm than good, is wasting both blood and money, and is at the best a "well-meaning fool."

Miss Kingsley assures us that she went to Africa in the belief that the missionary represented everything that was good and the trader everything that was evil. But on shipboard, long before she reached Africa, when Miss Kingsley was mistaken for a missionary she thought it the greatest joke of modern times—and I rather agree with her. This is the one joke that she repeats with infinite laughter every time that it occurs. Her laughter of course measures her inward sense of utter incongruity and want of sympathy. Her fellow passengers knew her attitude before she reached the first African port.

<sup>1</sup> *Travels in West Africa*, p. 514.

Another marked feature about Miss Kingsley's books is the author's want of sympathy for the sufferings of the natives, and her want of pity when they bleed under the cruel lash of the white man. Though written by a woman, they are books without tears.

For instance, a story of heartrending wrong and suffering was told me by a trader of Fernando Po, who, although he had been on the coast for years, and, one would think, had been hardened by cruel sights, was yet deeply affected as he related it. I was able to verify it afterwards. It was a story of the cruelty of Portuguese planters to certain Krumen, whom by a false contract they enticed to San Thomé Island and then compelled them to remain and labour on the coco plantations as slaves. The conduct of the Portuguese in Africa justifies the opinion of the Krumen, who says: "God done make white man and God done make black man but dem debil done make Portuguese." These enslaved Krumen, watching their opportunity, after two years escaped from San Thomé in canoes by night. They did not know that they were one hundred and fifty miles from the mainland, and they hoped that by some unforeseen means they might reach their own country. They all perished; most of them by hunger and thirst. After many days one or two canoes drifted to Fernando Po. In these the men were still alive—but scarcely alive, and they died after being rescued.

This story Miss Kingsley tells, in substance, though in abridged form, and with no comment except the following apology for the Portuguese: "My Portuguese friends assure me that there never was a thought of permanently detaining the boys, and that they were only just keeping them until other labourers arrived to take their place on the plantation. I quite believe them, for I have seen too much of the Portuguese in Africa to believe that they

would in a wholesale way be cruel to natives.”<sup>1</sup> Surely the quality of Miss Kingsley’s charity is not strained! I scarcely know a white man in West Africa who would offer any apology for those men, or who would call them his “friends.” If the poor Krumen had been captured, Miss Kingsley’s friends would probably have flogged them to death. As a matter of fact, there are always a number of escaped slaves leading a wretched existence in the deep forest of San Thomé. And the Portuguese have been known to go hunting them as we would hunt wild animals. They sometimes find them hiding in the tops of the tall trees, and it is considered uncommonly fine sport to shoot them in the trees and bring them crashing to the ground.

Miss Kingsley disliked any and every change that threatened to improve the native and thus to mar the picturesque wildness of his savage state. She is perfectly consistent with her anti-mission views when she tells us the kind of native that she admires, as follows: “A great, strong Kruman, for example, with his front teeth filed, nothing much on but oil, half a dozen wives, and half a hundred jujus [fetishes], is a sort of person whom I hold higher than any other form of native.”<sup>2</sup> Well, it is proverbial that tastes differ; but the missionary thinks that, as compared with this, the Christian ideal is higher and nobler. Miss Kingsley informs us (through the words of another whom she quotes with approval) of the treatment received, at the hands of these same Krumen, by shipwrecked and half-drowned passengers cast helpless upon the shore: “If you get ashore you don’t save the things you stand up in—the natives strip you.” “Of course they are cannibals; they are all cannibals when they get a chance.”<sup>3</sup> And this is the sort

<sup>1</sup> *Travels in West Africa*, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> *West African Studies*, p. 385.

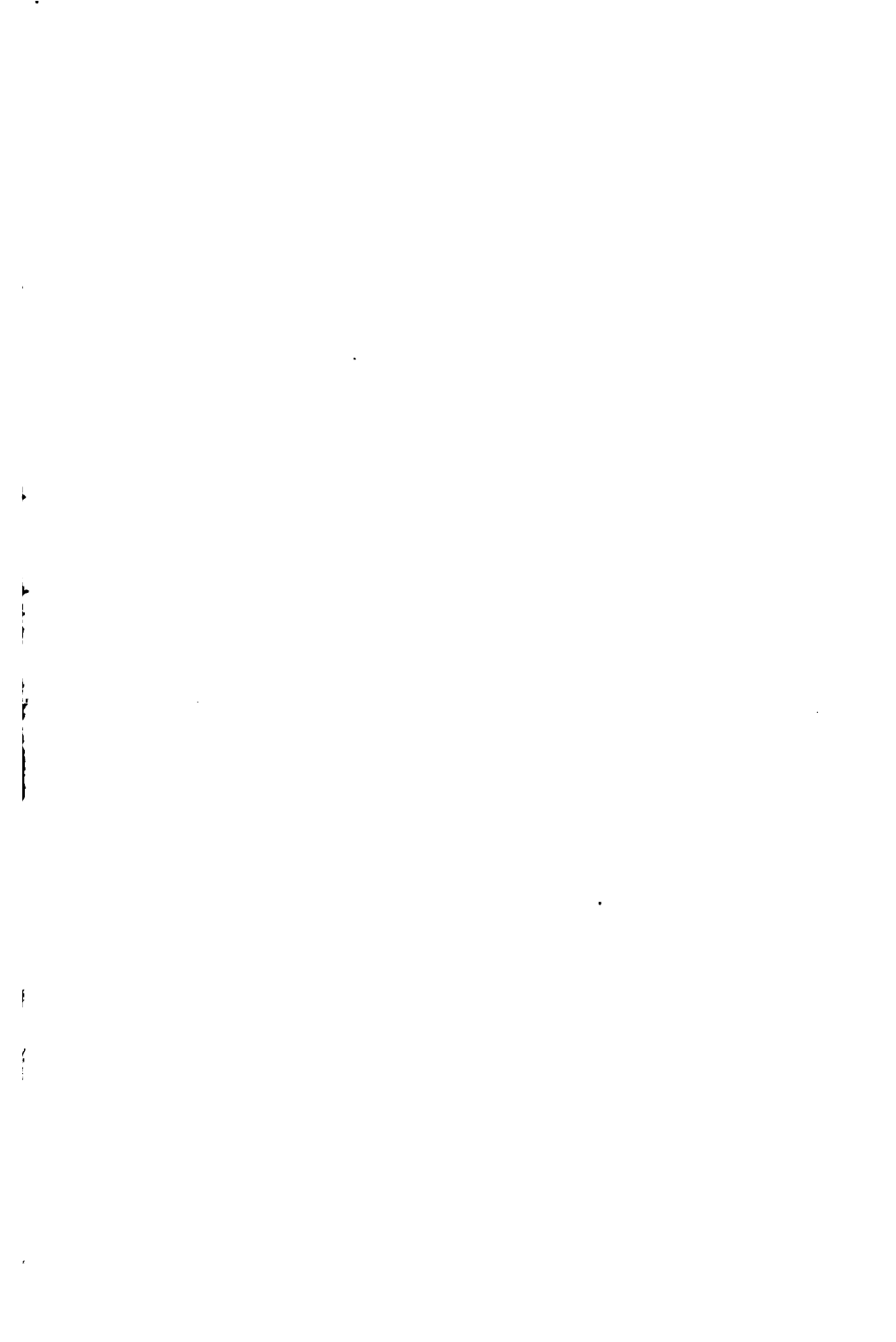
<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.



**A. CONTRAST.**  
Anyoroguli, a Christian woman of Gaboon.



**WOMEN OF THE INTERIOR RETURNING FROM THE GARDENS  
WITH CASSAVA AND FIREWOOD.**



of person whom Miss Kingsley holds "higher than any other form of native" !

That the native Christians should inspire aversion is exactly what we should expect ; and yet we are scarcely prepared for the inveterate animosity, the almost fierce hostility, that she everywhere reveals when she comes in contact with a native Christian. Miss Kingsley's attacks upon the African Christians are the most unworthy of all the things she has said. To give a single instance, I would refer to her story told in *Travels in West Africa* (p. 557) of a night which she spent in the house of a Bible teacher of the Basle Mission. Two mission teachers, together with a great many others, came into the room. The teachers, she says, "lounge around and spit in all directions." Next morning again, she says, "the mission teachers get in with my tea, and sit and smoke and spit, while I have my breakfast. Give me the cannibal Fang !"

Are we to conclude that cannibalism in Miss Kingsley's opinion is a less grievous offense against society than smoking and spitting ? For that matter, cannibals spit too. And I should think they would ! And, then, were the other natives who were present, the untutored savages, not smoking and spitting ? It may be regarded as certain that they were smoking if they had tobacco ; and whether or not they were smoking I am sure they were spitting ; for that nasty habit is racial and continental. Even white men in Africa contract the habit ; and, what's more, they *scratch* : they spit and scratch—the effect perhaps of the climate. I have known a few native Christians who neither smoke nor spit ; but I have not known a savage, either man or woman, who did not do both. Why, then, single out these two poor boys from the rest of the company ? And why visit upon their heads all the odium of a racial habit ? If, at the instance of the

preaching of the Gospel, they have left off cannibalism, and killing, and adultery, and stealing, and lying, I think they will scarcely be damned for spitting ; and I am sure they will leave that off too before they enter heaven.

I well know the manners of native boys who have been in the mission long enough to become teachers. They have an instinct for good manners. It would be far easier to criticize their morals than their manners. At this same place Miss Kingsley sent an attendant to ask the teacher for wood to make a fire. The attendant returned and said that the teacher would not give him wood unless it was paid for. Knowing the cordial hospitality and eager attention that would be given to a white woman by any and every mission teacher that I have met in Africa, I am compelled, from the extraordinary behaviour of this teacher, to doubt whether Miss Kingsley was a gracious guest. But we need not remain in doubt ; for Miss Kingsley, while she was the guest of this teacher, in a mission house, had with her a demijohn of rum, which she dispensed to the natives in pay and barter, as was her custom everywhere ; and it is more than possible that the teacher's message that his wood was for sale was a moral protest, not only against the violation of hospitality, but also against the violation of those moral and religious principles to which his life and honour were committed, and upon which depended, as he sincerely believed, the salvation of his people.

It would be my duty to show that Miss Kingsley received most of her so-called facts directly from the traders, and that all that came under her own observation she saw through the medium of their opinions. But Miss Kingsley has forestalled the necessity by the following frank confession : "All I know that is true regarding West Africa, I owe to the traders."<sup>1</sup> Miss Kingsley must have

<sup>1</sup> *Travels in West Africa*, p. 7.

felt that she owed an enormous debt of gratitude to the traders : for through two large volumes she sings a continual pæan to the trader's praise. I might by the citation of facts within my own knowledge show that in some instances Miss Kingsley was mistaken ; but I have not the least disposition to do so. For the life of the trader on the far-away beaches of West Africa is so cheerless and loveless—sometimes, indeed, an unrelenting and lonely fight with temptation, fever, delirium and death—that sympathy is more becoming than criticism.

But my deepest sympathy and highest praise must be for those who have gone to Africa not for gold, but at the sacrifice of gold and other interests ; who left home and social pleasures not indifferently and impatient of restraint, but with tears and aching hearts, that they might carry the Gospel of peace to the most miserable of human beings ; whom they are not ashamed to call brethren. Many such are now working in the unwholesome jungles ; but a far greater number lie in the grass-grown cemeteries, who fell in the fight with a deadly but invisible foe, a foe which became visible only in the incarnations of delirium, when the fever like fire was coursing through their veins. To them belongs the greater praise, for they died not in seeking their own interest, but for others.

## XVIII

### SAINTS AMONG SAVAGES

**C**ARLYLE remarks : " If there are depths in man as deep as hell, there are also heights as high as heaven ; are not both heaven and hell made out of him ? "

The final argument and the best apologetic for missions in Africa is the native Christian. He is not much on exhibition but he is there. The traveller does not find him ; for his voice is not heard in the streets. Many a white resident in Africa is unaware of him and is incredulous when he is pointed out ; even as the people of Nazareth did not know that there was any essential difference between themselves and Jesus though He had lived thirty years in their midst. But the spiritual eye of John the Baptist discerned in Him one who had no need of repentance. And the " seeing eye " will easily discover the native Christian in Africa ; and it is really worth while, for at his best he is as much like his Master as any that can be found anywhere, and particularly in that gentleness that would not break the bruised reed.

The first elder of the Fang Church was Mba Obam (shortened to Mb'Obam), chief of Makwefia, and uncle of Ndong Koni. He was tall, good looking, very quiet and of strong personality.

On one occasion when I was staying in his town over night it happened that there was a great celebration. A month before this a big man of the town, more important than popular, had died ; and having mourned for him

every night for a whole month, the people thought they had done their full duty. It remained only to give him a good "send-off" in a great dance and feast, which released all his friends and relations from further obligation of mourning. All the men from the neighbouring towns had been invited and there was a great crowd and infinite noise. In the midst of the furious dancing of the men some untoward incident occurred that precipitated a general row, in which every man drew his sword, and they instantly divided, according to their tribal relationships, into two lines of glaring, dangerous savages. Before I had fully comprehended the situation Mb'Obam, who had taken no part in the celebration, came from his house down the street in long strides, every inch a chief, as much so as the last of the Mohicans, but carrying no sword. At the extreme risk of his life, as it seemed to me, he pushed into the middle, between the lines of thrusting and parrying swords, and commanded silence. To my surprise, they obeyed him and became quiet, the sudden silence contrasting strangely with the former uproar and confusion.

Mb'Obam, with the gentleness of a father, reminded them that they were no longer savages, but brothers, and that if they should hastily shed each other's blood they would be sure to regret it afterwards. There was no more quarrelling that night.

Mb'Obam and his wife, Sara, had lived at Angom in the time of Mr. Marling and had there become Christians. After Mr. Marling's death they had moved down the river to Makwefia. Ndong Koni and Mb'Obam built a beautiful chapel at Makwefia. I have already told how that Ndong Koni paid for the windows and doors by working in the yard at Baraka. In this chapel Mb'Obam held a service every Sunday, besides early morning prayers each day, at which all the people assembled be-

fore going away to their gardens and their various occupations of work or pleasure.

I have told elsewhere how that, when Mb'Obam was dying, he called the people around him and begged them to be good to his wife, Sara, and not to accuse her of bewitching him when he was gone. He also reminded them how in late years he had protected the women against whom this charge was made. They promised, of course, and they meant it; for they revered him; but as soon as he was dead old beliefs prevailed and old customs asserted tyrannous authority. They charged Sara with having caused Mb'Obam's death by witchcraft. They dared not kill her; for they were in the vicinity of the French government. But they drove her on her hands and knees up and down the street with two men sitting on her back. From this cruelty I rescued her one day with a stout stick which I used somewhat freely; otherwise it might have ended in her death. When Sara was sufficiently recovered I said to her: "Sara, what can I do to protect you against further cruelty?"

She replied: "Mr. Milligan, I think you had better find me a husband."

It wasn't entirely out of my line—if there's any such thing as a *line* in a missionary's work—for, as an essential part of my pastoral duty, I found it necessary to run a kind of matrimonial bureau. Well, we found a husband for Sara, which was not difficult, for they all knew that she was a good woman. A Christian man married her and I hope they may still be living happily together.

One night Mb'Obam came to an Mpongwe prayer-meeting in Gaboon and brought a number of his Fang friends. The Mpongwe being a coast tribe, all but the Christians among them despise the Fang. The meeting was in an Mpongwe village and there were many present who were not Christians. It happened that I was conducting the

meeting ; and after telling the Mpongwe who Mb'Obam was I asked him to address them, which he did in their own language. In the course of his talk he referred to the ark that "Adam" built. Ndong Koni was sitting not far from him, and when Mb'Obam referred a second time to "Adam's ark," before these better-informed Mpongwe, Ndong Koni quietly said to him : "Father, you mean Noah."

Mb'Obam, without the least embarrassment, replied : "Was it Noah? Thank you, my son. I thought it was Adam that built the ark ; but it does not affect what I was going to say."

The simplicity of it was so beautiful that we scarcely thought of its being amusing. Then he went on and made a most fitting and touching comparison between his own life and that of Noah, preaching through all those years the while he was preparing the ark, a lonely believer in the midst of unbelief and ridicule and wickedness that rends a believer's heart. "Yet Noah's words came to pass because they were God's words ; so God will in His own time justify us. Meanwhile we will go on preaching ; and may we be faithful and uncomplaining."

He made a profound impression on the Mpongwe Christians ; and often afterwards when I returned from my journeys some of them would ask me if I had been to Mb'Obam's town and if he was well. When I heard that he was very sick I sent a boat and brought him to Baraka. I took him to the French hospital for a few days. But nothing could save his life. It was only at his death that I realized how much he was loved and respected. He himself never knew.

Another man, Angona, had been an important man in his town, having had several wives, and a great variety of powerful and well-tried fetishes. Angona, on one oc-

casion staying over night at Gaboon, took the opportunity of spending the evening at Baraka and advising with me on certain matters, moral and religious. He told me how that recently he had nearly lost his life by his refusal to observe a certain Fang custom which I venture to mention. Angona had been visiting a friend in another town and had refused to assume the marital relations of his host, according to their friendly custom. The friend was angry, suspecting that something was lacking in his friendship, and not liking to see an old custom discarded. His anger subsided however at Angona's explanation that he was a Christian. But not so the woman's anger. She tried to kill him by putting poison in his food.

Angona at the time of his conversion put away all of his wives but one. He had paid a very large dowry for each of them; so that in putting them away he had also put away his wealth and to a large extent had surrendered influence and social position. But the surrender of his famous collection of fetishes, which he had gathered among many tribes, to which no doubt he owed his success and his possessions, occasioned greater surprise than anything else. By the virtue of one of these fetishes he had been successful in matrimony, and by the virtue of another his wife had not deserted him; one fetish had procured him success in trade, another had made him successful in war; by means of one he had recovered from a dangerous illness, and by another his gardens had prospered; by the virtue of one he could cause an aggressive enemy to "swell up and burst," and by another build an invisible fire around himself when he slept, through which no witch could pass. And most powerful of all was the sacred skull of his father. All the people of the town stood by and stared as Angona delivered to me all these fetishes; but at last when he went to fetch the skull the women were warned

to flee lest by any mischance the casket might open and they should see what was inside and die. Angona by this renunciation gained the reputation of being a particular fool. But he at once began preaching to the people and before many months there was a class of sixteen Christians in that town.

As soon as I received this report of Angona's work I visited the town. After a brief service at which all the people were present, I asked whether there were any sick people in the town, and they directed me to the house of a woman who was recovering from a long illness. While I was talking to her another woman, one of the Christians, came in and setting a pot on the ground beside the sick woman, said: "The pot is yours. I am a Christian. The palaver is finished."

Another woman arose, and going over to the woman who had brought the pot, put her arm around her in a half embrace and said:

"Yes, you are a Christian indeed."

The sick woman had been cared for by the other woman during her illness and had given her this pot for her kindness. Afterwards, when she was nearly well she repented and asked for the pot. When it was refused she gave free rein to a very sharp tongue and roundly cursed the other woman. The whole community had evidently become involved in the quarrel, which was becoming more bitter, when this Christian woman suddenly brought it to an end, as I have told.

A few weeks after this one of my catechists, Amvama, visited Angona's town. While there it was recalled by the heathen people of the town that a party belonging to Amvama's town, in the days of cannibalism, and many years before Amvama was born, had killed a man of their tribe and had devoured him. In Africa, it is considered a great insult to a man to eat him, an insult also

to his friends, such an insult as may never be forgotten until it is avenged. During the night, while Amvama was sleeping in Angona's house, the people, having surrounded the house, called Angona out and told him they were going to kill Amvama. It would have been a great loss to the work and a grief to me if they killed him, for Amvama was one of the best boys in all Africa. The handful of Christians and their sympathizers, with Angona at their head, replied that they would lay down their lives in defense of him. The heathen probably did not expect any such thing; for it is seldom that a town is divided thus. They usually act as if by one impulse; but Christianity draws new lines, makes new friends and new foes. The Christian's friends are sometimes those of a hostile tribe, while his foes are "they of his own household." The Christians, with Angona at their head, gathered close around Amvama and soon showed that they meant what they had said. They were few of course as compared with the heathen; but the latter were not willing to kill their own people. Before they had time to plan for action the Christians had escorted Amvama to a canoe and got him away in safety. The next time I visited that town I had a "war palaver" with those people. But I was greatly elated over the conduct of Angona and the handful of Christians whom he had taught.

This boy Amvama, who was rescued from savage bloodthirst in Angona's town, was the very first of those African boys whom I gathered around me in the French Congo and was also with me the day that I left Africa, nearly six years afterwards. In that time he grew from a small boy to a young man of probably eighteen years. I used to say that he was the best-loved boy in Africa.

Amvama never was a heathen. He was born close to Angom, and in his childhood never even saw the worst





AMVAMA, A FANG CATECHIST (See p. 316).

was off further still. The  
 by Mr. Mullings, who is a  
 too young, some twenty  
 Mr. Mullings' comment. And  
 people in the world take  
 a different view. I have seen  
 tions, but I never saw them  
 live in the real world of  
 characteristic of the  
 as quick to kill as any  
 faithfulness and loyalty to  
 from all, and the crew  
 always added to my  
 on a journey up the river  
 a white man appeared  
 the crew had eyes of  
 and one white man to  
 had eyes—a comrade in

In the end, does he find a "hook" or "pound" for one of the *plumules*? He "warily" goes to hang food, but the *Elanus* is a snail. One day, he lets *Elanus* hang pull at the oars, were even brought a supply of coffee for them, my table knife to eat, were still eating I ran for the knife. It was, I thought, to me, but, no, no, orange juice, he when, short time before the 1st of incident, which he had a astounding he said: "I'm not"

It seemed you didn't tell me that.  
 Perhaps we have been saying so here.



IVAMA A FANCY CLOTHES (S. 10. 10)

forms of heathenism. He was received into the church by Mr. Marling while he was still a child; altogether too young, some thought; but the years fully justified Mr. Marling's judgment. Among the most impulsive people in the world, Amvama was peculiarly deliberate and thoughtful. I have seen him in many trying situations, but I never saw him angry. Among a people who live in the realm of emotion, Amvama's distinguishing characteristic was common sense. In school he was not as quick to learn as many others, but such was his faithfulness and persistence that in the end he surpassed them all, and he had a saving sense of humour that always added gaiety to any company. On one occasion, on a journey up the river, when I was accompanied by a white man with an extremely bald head—the first that the crew had ever seen—Amvama caused the natives and one white man to smile by comparing it to a fresh-laid egg—a comparison that was quite new in Africa.

In the early days before the *Dorothy*, Amvama was my "boy," or personal attendant, when I travelled about in the *Evangeline*. He was always a cleanly boy, according to Fang ideals, but the Fang ideal leaves something to be desired. One day, in the *Evangeline*, the crew, after a long pull at the oars, were eating oranges, of which I had brought a supply from the orchard at Baraka. I gave them my table-knife to cut their oranges. While they were still eating I helped myself to an orange and asked for the knife. It was passed to Amvama who handed it to me; but, observing that it was dripping with the orange juice, he wiped it carefully on his bare leg. A short time before I left Africa I told Amvama of this incident, which he had forgotten. Looking at me in astonishment he said: "I? Did I do that?"

It seemed incredible to him. In after years he would no more have done any such thing than a white man.

However sincere the African Christian may be, the knowledge of Christian morality in minute particulars is a long, slow growth. One day, out on the bay in the *Evangeline* and running before a fair wind, we sighted the sails of a schooner coming towards the harbour but still far out at sea. Amvama and Captain Makuba disputed as to the name of the schooner. Makuba became impatient and said to me: "Mr. Milligan, I wish you would tell Amvama that he must not contradict me; for he is a small boy and I am an old man." I had always thought that Makuba was a very young man.

Finally, these two, both of them Christians, and perfectly sincere, decided to bet on the name of the schooner. The bet was a franc cash and they asked me to hold the money; whereupon I delivered my sermon on gambling.

I had hoped that Amvama would be the first ordained minister among the Fang; but when he was about sixteen the need of catechists became imperative and I felt compelled to cut off his further education and send him out into the whitening field of the harvest. This was a great disappointment. For although he proved himself a faithful and invaluable worker, he could never be as efficient as if he had had adequate training, and could never be entirely independent of the missionary's supervision.

I placed Amvama in a large town, called *Ndumentanga*, where there were a number of newly-professed Christians who were eager to be taught. The work was difficult and trying and he was a young boy and inexperienced; and, as I have said, had never seen the worst of African heathenism. It was with strange feelings that I left him in the street of that town one very dark night when the rain was pouring down,—left him to prove himself. For four months I did not see him; but I had the fullest report of his work, and it was most satisfactory. He conducted a daily class for religious instruction, teaching

hymns and catechism and on each question of the latter giving explanations and practical talks. He also held a service on Sunday ; and, besides, taught a day-school each morning in which all who desired might learn to read the Bible. He also regularly visited other towns that were not too far away. It was on one of these latter visits that he had the narrow escape in Angona's town.

For the next two years Amvama spent most of his time at Ndumentanga. Shortly after his first arrival, a man of the town, who had been visiting another town, returned home very sick. Amvama called on him, and finding that he and his wife had become Christians while away from home, he instructed them daily in their house, frequently calling all the Christians of the town to go with him, and sing and pray with the sick man. He was with him when he died, seeking to strengthen his faith ; and the people, perhaps for the first time, saw a man die without fear. Then the heathen wished to open the body, in order to see whether the man had been bewitched. But Amvama with quiet authority took possession of the body until it should be given a Christian burial. I marvel that a young boy was able to hold out against them and induce them to forego all their heathen rites ; but he had won the love and confidence of all these people. He held a brief service at the house ; and when the body was placed in the grave he called upon the people to be quiet while he offered a prayer. They all stood by, some in mute astonishment at a Christian burial service, others laughing and falling against each other in that weak abandon everywhere characteristic of the very ignorant. What a scene for an artist ! A young boy standing in the midst of a crowd of carnal and degraded men and women, some of them aged ; holding fast to the things that are spiritual, contending for the reality of those things that are not seen !

For several years Amvama had been betrothed to a young girl, who died when he was about seventeen. The dowry, which included all that he had ever earned, had been paid and the girl was living with Amvama's mother until she should be of marriageable age. It is the universal custom among the Fang that when a girl dies before reaching that age the dowry paid for her must be returned. So Amvama was entitled to the dowry which he had paid ; and it was the more urgent because there was no dowry for him anywhere else within sight. But the girl's people, probably taking advantage of the fact that Amvama was a Christian, refused to return the dowry. Such a refusal is always a matter of war.

One evening when he was back at Baraka for a few days, he came to see me desiring my advice on this matter of the dowry, wishing to know what he as a Christian ought to do, but not wishing to ask me directly.

Politeness among some African tribes is reduced to a fine art. One of its chief elements is indirection. I ask a boy whether he will work for me ; and he replies : "Did I say I wouldn't?"

Sometimes the third person is used instead of the first ; one is occasionally reminded of the French *On dit*.

After an interval of silence Amvama remarked : "Those people ought to pay me back that dowry."

I made no reply ; and after a pause he said : "Those people are treating me very badly."

Another pause, and then : "My people all want to go to war, and there are five or six towns of my people."

Another pause, and he said : "I tell you there will be blood spilled!"

At this I spoke and said : "We don't need the help of your people, Amvama ; you and I will go, ourselves alone, and will kill all the people of that town. Upon our arrival in the town we will hold a service, and of

course everybody will come, and they will come unarmed. After singing one or two hymns I will ask you to offer a prayer; and while you are praying I'll open fire on the congregation and we'll make short work of them."

He laughed and said: "I only wished to know what you thought."

"Why, then, did you not ask me?" I said.

He replied: "I think I have been asking you ever since I came in."

The people would not give back the dowry, and Amvama would not let it come to a clash of arms; so he surrendered it. But about a year later his brother (more likely a cousin) died, leaving two wives, who by the law of inheritance became Amvama's property. Both of them were eager to marry him. One of the two was as good a woman as he could have found, and he afterwards married her. The other he gave, with her consent, to a cousin who was single.

In the examination of candidates for baptism I had to rely very much upon Amvama's judgment in regard to those whom he had taught. In one of the towns where he had taught there was a young man who had been a Christian for more than two years and who had attended the classes faithfully; and yet Amvama did not recommend him for baptism. I asked him the reason, and he said that there was only one thing against him, and nothing else; he was lazy—so lazy that he was ridiculed in the whole town. Amvama said: "He will bring reproach on his religion. And I think that since his faith enables him to do other things that he did not do before, it ought also to enable him to do a little work."

A few months before Amvama left Ndumentanga, war broke out between that town and a town of the Bifil people, a clan of the Fang who had come but recently from the far interior and were very savage. A Bifil man had

stolen a woman of Ndumentanga. The old chief, who was a bloodthirsty heathen, told the town to prepare for war. But he found a rival in Amvama who advised that they must first make every effort to get the woman back without shedding blood, which could probably be done through her father's influence. Amvama also told them that the fetishes upon which they were depending for protection were useless.

The chief was disgusted at the suggestion of a peaceful settlement of the affair, and passionately cried for war; and the people eagerly responded. The most that Amvama could do was to hold the Christians firm to their duty. As the chief exhorted Amvama exhorted too, but without the least passion or excitement. The town was divided between these two: an old chief, the very embodiment of the heathenism of the past; and the young boy, representing the future—the authority of a Christ-enlightened conscience and the power of a Christian life. The heathen went to war; but the Christians refused to go and so broke with an immemorial custom.

They attacked the town of the Bifil, but the only result was that several of their own men were killed. The Bifil secured the body of one of them, and it was reported to me that they followed the interior custom and cut the body in pieces, sending a piece of it to each of their towns. If they did this it would be a call to arms. The pieces of the body would be boiled and eaten, and thus it would become a strong fetish protection against the enemy. The people of Ndumentanga returned home from the war with sore hearts and with less faith in their fetishes.

The war went on more desperately and it became unsafe for Amvama; so I went after him and brought him back to Baraka. But he returned from the field of his labours bringing his sheaves with him, in men and women rescued from degradation and sin, and in the love of many.





FANG CHRISTIANS.

In the middle of the front row stands Anyama. Behind him, on his right, is Ndong Koni. The tall young man is Robert Boardman, the blind catechist.

When I left Africa I felt that I was leaving many friends behind me ; humble friends but true, and I cherish the memory of their devotion. Some of them I loved because they were lovable, and others for the labour and anxiety expended upon them—the sweat of the brow, and the brain and the heart. But there were none whom I loved more, and there are none whom I more often long to see, than Amvama and Ndong Koni.

I cannot close these sketches without some reference to another who was an invaluable helper in the work among the Fang. He was totally blind. He bore an English name, *Robert Boardman*, and had no African name. The natives called him *Bobbie*. He was not a Fang but an Mpongwe, and his mother was an American Negress. His father was educated at Baraka away back in the early days when the missionaries were allowed to use English, and he spoke English well. When he was a young man he came to America. In those days Africa, to Americans, was a romance rather than a reality. Any chief of a village or head of his own family coming here was called a *prince*. So young Boardman (Robert's father) passed himself off as a prince, and probably without any intentional deception. He married a Negress of the South, who supposed that by her marriage she became a princess. She left family and friends all behind and went to Africa. The disillusionment was very hard and very bitter ; and at last, inevitably, she sought relief in drink. She was evidently a woman of superior mind, if one might judge by her children, of whom there were five. One of these was poor Augustus Boardman, of whom I have written in another chapter, and whom drink brought to an early grave.

Robert was the youngest child. He was a very interesting boy, and intellectually far above the average. As a young man he lived the dissolute life that was general

among the Mpongwe of Gaboon. His blindness was the last result of his dissipation, and was also the cure. He never walked alone again ; a little boy led him by the hand. Blindness is a more terrible affliction in Africa, where the helpless are neglected, and where roads are rough and often infested with ants or snakes.

He was extremely unhappy after his blindness. There were times when it seemed that it would drive him mad. In his misery he made others miserable around him. Poor material, one would surely say, for the grace of God or any other moral influence to work upon—this physical and moral wreck. But, as I once heard a reclaimed out-cast say, "Jesus loves to walk by the seashore where the wrecks come in."

When I went to Gaboon I engaged Robert as my interpreter ; for he knew Fang as well as he knew Mpongwe. Then, when I could speak Fang without him, I undertook the Mpongwe work and I used him as my interpreter to the Mpongwe ; so he continued in my service. The first year, when I was itinerating among the Fang and travelling in the *Evangeline*, he went everywhere with me. I recall one evening when we were setting out from the beach in a very heavy sea and had got beyond the surf we saw Robert's little attendant on the beach very much excited and waving to us to come back. He was yelling something to us which we could not hear distinctly across the roaring surf, but I thought he was trying to tell us something about "Bobbie's wife." Very reluctantly I told the crew to go back. We were already in the surf and were going ashore as if pulled by wild horses when at last we made out what the boy was saying, namely : "Bobbie has forgotten his pipe."

The African has no mental perspective, according to our ideas ; things great and small, the most momentous and the most trivial, appear upon a flat surface of equal-

ity. But it would scandalize an African to hear one speak of a pipe in this disrespectful way.

Robert had an unusual mind and was athirst for knowledge. His interpreting was a kind of education for him and he made the most of it. He was always alert for new words and their exact meaning, and he had an excellent memory. There was also a vein of poetry in him. I once heard him, in offering an evening prayer, ask God that Satan might not sow the tares of bad dreams in our sleep—the more appropriate because of the native regard for dreams and the habit of vivid dreaming.

But his chief love was music. He was passionately fond of it, and he had a good tenor voice. Shortly after I first knew him, when he was so unhappy, I began to give him some instruction on the organ each day after class. My only intention was to lighten his misery and relieve his solitude. I had not the least thought of any return in missionary service. The little organ which I used in itinerating I left with him between journeys. It was a new and delightful way of spending the hours, and he became more cheerful. In two years a very great change had taken place in him. He was both cheerful and devout. When the time of harvest came in the Fang field and I had need of catechists he was well equipped for the work and I sent him. He took the organ with him ; for he played the Fang hymns and played them well. When a secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions afterwards visited Africa he found Robert Boardman among the Fang, preaching and singing, and he made special mention of him on his return to America.

Robert, through the agency of my *matrimonial bureau*, married a Fang woman, Nze, who loved him devotedly. She was a remarkably good-looking woman—almost beautiful. Poor blind Robert never saw her ; and one day, after he had been married for some time, I delighted him

—and saddened him too—by giving him a minute description of her. For a while after his marriage I placed him at Ayol, which was Nze's town. After several months, when I was at Ayol, I decided to take him to another town. Then the heathen relations of Nze suddenly discovered that he had not given sufficient dowry, although he had given all they asked. It was never half so hard to get my African friends married as to *keep* them married.

The family of Nze secured her in a house while they talked the palaver with Robert, telling him that he had not paid what they had asked. The street was filled with people and there was the wildest excitement. The chief of the town was not there, and when I saw that my powers of persuasion were not adequate for the occasion, I told Robert that as it was now late in the night we would go without Nze, and that I myself would afterwards talk the palaver with the chief and would do all that I possibly could to get Nze back. He yielded, but he was almost broken-hearted.

We got into our canoe and started for the *Dorothy*, which was anchored a little below the town. When we came alongside whom should we find in the launch but Nze! She had broken out of her prison-house when night came—but I can't imagine how, unless some Christian woman helped her—and stealing through the dreadful mangrove swamp, had reached her canoe and had gone to the launch. At the very moment that I saw her we heard the wildest yelling behind us. The people of the town had just discovered her escape; and they, of course, thought that we had stolen her. I shouted to the crew to "stand by" for their lives. We sprang aboard, and while weighing the anchor put out all the lights. What if the anchor should be fouled, as it was last time, when it delayed us half an hour!

Our pursuers were rapidly drawing nearer and were almost upon us. They included, I presume, every heathen savage in the town, each of them yelling like ten, and perhaps engaged meanwhile in loading their guns with such deadly material as broken pots and barbed wire. At last, "All right," shouted the mate; and we moved off just as the enemy in a fleet of canoes came round the last curve of the narrow river. I had made our party, including Nze, lie down flat in the bottom of the launch; only Ndong Koni at the wheel and myself at the engine remained standing. Despite rage and excitement I did not expect that they would fire upon us. But I very much feared that a stray shot, intended only to intimidate us, might do us as much damage as the "bow drawn at a venture" did to a certain king a long time ago. We were soon beyond their range; and then Robert's gladness and the unbounded joy of Nze were a sufficient reward for us all. For my part, I was exceedingly glad that Nze's husband was present; otherwise an elopement would have been credited to me.

A short time before I left Africa I was conducting a prayer-meeting in an Mpongwe town, at which Robert was present. He rose and told the people about his work among the Fang and what great changes were taking place through the preaching of the Gospel, which must surely be the power of God. Then in closing he told them something of the new joy that had come into his own life. He said that although at first he had been bitter and rebellious against the fate that had turned his day into night, yet he had lived to thank God for sending even this affliction; for, in his blindness, he had wearied of the "far country," and like the prodigal had come home. In Christ he had found pardon and peace; and finally he had been permitted to go as a missionary to

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the Fang, whom he had learned to love, and many of whom, he was sure, loved him.

"I know," said he, "that I shall never see this world again, nor the faces of my friends ; but I am walking in the light of heaven."

In a deep undertone, full of wonder, full of sympathy, full of tears, they all responded : "A-y, Bobbie ! A-y, Bobbie !"

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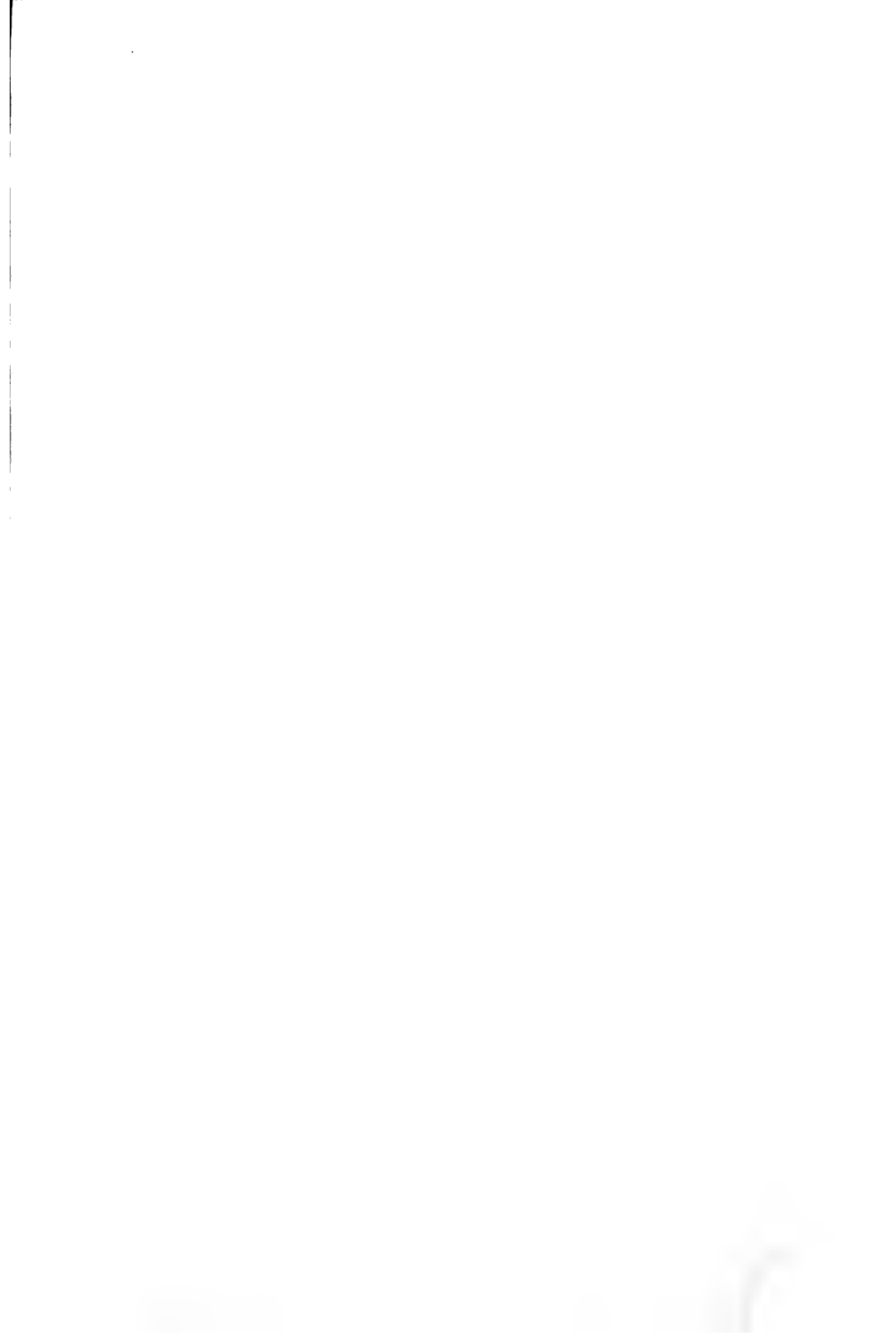
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